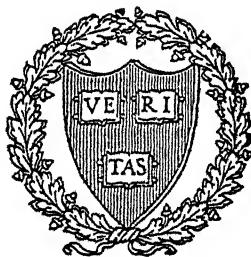


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ESSAYS  
IN MEMORY OF  
BARRETT WENDELL

BY

HIS ASSISTANTS



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*Dedicated to*

MRS. WENDELL



## PREFACE

THE name of Barrett Wendell belongs to the literary tradition of America and needs no memorials to ensure its enduring place in that tradition. The present volume, therefore, was not conceived with the thought of adding lustre to the name which will be remembered long after these essays are forgotten. This memorial is rather the expression of a desire on the part of some of those most closely associated with him to express their admiration and affection for the man. Composed only of contributions from Mr. Wendell's former assistants in his courses at Harvard, the present volume, it is believed, is unique among such tributes. The group of contributors is a small circle indeed, only one of many that would be honored to pay homage to the great teacher. But through more than thirty years Mr. Wendell's relations with his successive assistants were peculiarly intimate; the companionship which he gave to those working with him was an inspiration. It is, therefore, appropriate for them to commemorate their gratitude for his abiding influence.

W. R. CASTLE, JR.  
PAUL KAUFMAN

*Easter, 1926.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| BARRETT WENDELL—TEACHER . . . . .                | 1   |
| WILLIAM R. CASTLE, Jr.                           |     |
| PROFESSOR WENDELL AND THE PHILOSOPHERS . . . . . | 11  |
| DANIEL SARGENT                                   |     |
| WHAT IS COMPARATIVE LITERATURE? . . . . .        | 21  |
| OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL                             |     |
| THE SIX CENTURIES SINCE DANTE. . . . .           | 41  |
| H. W. L. DANA                                    |     |
| THE CRUX OF DANTE'S COMEDY . . . . .             | 61  |
| J. B. FLETCHER                                   |     |
| CHAUCER AND MEDIAEVAL ROMANCE . . . . .          | 93  |
| H. R. PATCH                                      |     |
| THE QUESTION OF MEDIAEVALISM . . . . .           | 109 |
| T. L. RIGGS                                      |     |
| CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE—RATIONALIST . . . . .        | 119 |
| H. W. HERRINGTON                                 |     |
| THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "VICE" . . . . .          | 153 |
| ROBERT WITHERINGTON                              |     |
| IN PRAISE OF CERVANTES . . . . .                 | 169 |
| H. B. LATHROP                                    |     |
| HERALDS OF ORIGINAL GENIUS . . . . .             | 189 |
| PAUL KAUFMAN                                     |     |
| IVANHOE AND ITS LITERARY CONSEQUENCES . . . . .  | 219 |
| G. H. MAYNADIER                                  |     |
| THE ASIAN LYRIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE . . . . . | 235 |
| H. L. SEAVER                                     |     |
| LYRIC POETRY . . . . .                           | 257 |
| H. DEW. FULLER                                   |     |
| THE FORSAKEN MERMAN . . . . .                    | 273 |
| H. G. LEACHE                                     |     |
| A NOTE ON YEATS . . . . .                        | 283 |
| N. J. O'CONOR                                    |     |
| JOSEPH CONRAD—ALCHEMYST OF THE SEA . . . . .     | 291 |
| P. A. HUTCHISON                                  |     |
| STELLIGERI—A FOOTNOTE ON DEMOCRACY . . . . .     | 301 |
| E. E. HUNT                                       |     |



**BARRETT WENDELL — TEACHER**



## BARRETT WENDELL — TEACHER

By WILLIAM R. CASTLE, JR.

**T**HREE is a German tradition of scholarship in American letters which rates exploration above discovery, the process above the conclusion. The exponents of this theory are more interested in Chaucer's verse than in his poetry; they read through microscopes, searching for faults rather than for beauty; they are so interested in tracing the origin of a great idea to its obscure progenitors that they forget the vitality and the influence of the idea itself. They spend years over the sources and the analysis of second-rate plays that were hardly worth the cost of printing and are not, intrinsically, worthy of an hour's study. They are the word-grubbers of literature, exalting the text above the thought expressed by the text. Yet they are immensely important in what might be called their accidental discoveries, in the by-products of their grubbing. A squirrel, digging for nuts, uproots a pebble, and the man, following the track of the squirrel, finds the gold under the crusted surface. So the student of ideas draws from the laborious accumulations of the grammarians new interpretations which explain misunderstood phases of the history of human thought, thereby illuminating the present and marking the path of the future.

These patient dissectors of works of imagination, therefore, are invaluable aids to true understanding of literature, which is literature only in so far as it is a true picture of many-sided life. No one recognized more clearly than Barrett Wendell, the importance of this kind of scholarly research. The reason that men sometimes criticized his attitude was that he refused to consider research as an end in itself. He respected it as mental discipline, but questioned the value of mental discipline

which has only itself as an aim. Wendell could respect a young man who spent a year in the collection of evidence as to the sources of an Elizabethan play. He could not fully respect the same man who, ten years later, was unable to correlate that evidence, to draw deductions from that evidence which would constitute a permanent contribution to human knowledge. In other words, mental discipline which did not create the power to reach and to express just and vital decisions seemed to him sterile.

In any consideration of Barrett Wendell as a teacher this attitude of mind toward what is commonly called scholarship, but is actually only one angle of scholarship, is of paramount importance. He had in his own make-up few of the characteristics of the average Doctor of Philosophy. He was frankly not interested in philology except in so far as it revealed new meanings in the texts. He read Æschylus and Horace, in the one case for the sublimity of thought and its magnificent expression, in the other for the delicate accuracy and charm of the portrayal of Roman life and ideas; but in neither case was he interested in the grammatical construction except in so far as it was necessary to explain the thought. He did not parse Greek and Latin; he read them. He was by nature too impatient for minute research, but was always ready gratefully to utilize the discoveries of others. He knew the value of research, but knew also that to undertake it himself was to waste his talents, just as it would be economic and artistic waste for a portrait painter to spend his time over the mechanical preparation of his colors. His power was synthetic rather than analytic. He understood how to use the tools which others made for him.

As a lecturer Wendell's eccentricities of manner repelled intolerant students, who believed them affectation. That they were not affectation does not change the fact that they diminished his usefulness as a teacher since they demonstrably nar-

rowed his field of influence. Youth is very often intolerant. He lost yet other followers because he refused to be stereotyped, refused to make his lectures mere collections of facts. To him dates, for example, were important as indicators of the period in which men lived and worked, not as the birthday or the death-day of this or that individual. It all seemed horribly vague to those who depend on written road signs rather than on the contour of the country. Some were bewildered and called him a false guide. Some called him an iconoclast in spite of his conservatism. This was because he always spoke the truth as he saw it, and those who had been taught by worthy school-mistresses that the "Ode to the Nativity" was the most sublime of English poems felt aggrieved and insulted when Wendell called it jejune, ridiculed its turgid metaphors and its false philosophy. His just and discriminating discussions of Milton's great poems seemed to them an incomplete apology.

Wendell's aim in teaching was to make his students think for themselves. His lectures were never textbooks. They were mental tonics. On active minds the reaction was both instantaneous and lasting; on sluggish or prosaic minds the effect was generally only irritating. The lecturer opened the windows; he did not stand by with a pulmotor to make sure that the patient breathed the air which blew through the window. His lectures, based on an astonishingly comprehensive and often minute knowledge of his subject, were never intended to be a complete presentation. They were always introductions, phrased in a manner to raise interest or curiosity. Wendell felt that knowledge of an author's work was an essentially personal and subjective affair, that it was no more possible to know a book through hearing people talk about it than it is to know a man through hearing him discussed. He never dissected a piece of literature because he knew that to dissect is too often to kill. He touched on its

good points and its bad, as they seemed to him personally good or bad, and urged his students to test his conclusions for themselves. He did not want them to feel, at the end of a lecture, that they had the whole story, but rather that they had been introduced to somebody tremendously worth the trouble of knowing, or that they had been led through a gate whence radiated many paths, any one of which presented fascinating possibilities of exploration or romance. He tried to pass on to them his own intense belief in the limitless extent and lure of intellectual adventure.

There are undoubtedly men alive to-day who believed that Wendell dwelt on the depraved or, as the college student would call it, the "smutty" side of books. People who hold any such belief are those who have permanent Sunday-school minds. It is quite true that, in lecturing on Fielding or on Donne's Love Poems, Wendell did not attempt to gloss over the vulgarities, to pretend a purity that was non-existent; but he never emphasized the impurity. He had the utmost contempt for "smut," for sly insinuation, for innuendo. It so thoroughly disgusted him that he could hardly be fair to an author like Sterne. He was not afraid of a spade so long as it was not gilded and used as a household decoration. He hated vice, in literature or anywhere else, but he loved truth too much to pretend virtue because rottenness was hidden under a cloth of gold. The value of our older literature, he pointed out, could never be tested by nineteenth-century standards of morals, since literature, to be vital, must be a true expression of the age in which it is produced. If it fell below that standard it was contemptible, just as it ceased also to be literature if it ignored human frailty and became priggish. The great literature of Greece is no less ennobling because it does not preach the moral tenets of a sectarian Christianity. Wendell was essentially, honestly, robustly pure-minded, an attribute which showed as clearly in his teaching as in his life.

Wendell was never afraid to be enthusiastic, but his enthusiasm was only for the great things. When he read a bit of verse, put down the book, sat silent for a moment, and then cried, "Is n't it beautiful?" his students knew that it was beautiful. They had perhaps not recognized it before; but the lecturer's emotion was real, and when he read the stanza again, all but the dullest felt at least a trace of his exaltation. Generally he made no comment; he only read a passage aloud in such manner as to impart to others the effect it had on him. And curiously enough Wendell, with all his eccentricities of speech, was a vivid and effective reader. This may have been by reason of the fact that his aim in reading was to bring out the author's thought — just, indeed, as it was his aim in lecturing. Nothing is eternally beautiful that is a mere matter of surface. The most beautiful clothes cannot wholly mask an ugly body, nor can beautiful expression permanently hide vacuity or viciousness of mind. This was why Wendell had such utter contempt for a writer like Oscar Wilde. For Wendell the thought always came first and its expression second. The rare combination of sublimity of thought and expression in such a phrase as Dante's "*In la sua voluntade è nostra pace*" was the ultimate hope of literature, seldom, alas, to be obtained, but always glowing like a star at the end of every upward-leading path. No student of Wendell will ever forget that great literature is the fit and therefore the beautiful expression of great thinking.

This idea Wendell carried over with him into the prosaic task of teaching men to write. Here, as in his courses on literature, his purpose was to make his students think. He knew they could never write even passably well unless they had something to say. He knew also that the attempt to express a thought clearly, concisely, and effectively is one of the best ways to clarify the thought itself. In his conferences with individual students, therefore, he laid little stress on mere

formal rhetorical construction and very great stress on straight thinking. That was the reason his conferences were stimulating to men with good minds, to all who were honestly trying to tell something; the reason also that other students were angry when he ruthlessly tore away the trappings of brave words and scornfully exhibited the vacuity of mind beneath the words. The only way to say a thing well is to have something to say.

Some students felt that Wendell was cruel in that he expected too much of them, that he looked for the miracle of a mature mind in an immature body, and that, not finding it, he scoffed. This is not true. He understood and loved youth, and the gropings of youth. The miracle of maturity of mind in a boy of twenty could point only to later rigidity, to the priggishness of excessive self-confidence. But he insisted on sincerity, on honest search for the truth. To the boy who was trying to think things out he was kindness itself, ready with a helping hand over the hard places, but never willing to furnish crutches, which only confirm inherent weakness. He was savage only to pretense, to conscious attempts to deceive, sarcastic only when laziness resulted in shoddy thinking and therefore shoddy writing. Sometimes the boys who suffered under the lash were angered or shamed into making a real effort, and then Wendell's advice was generously helpful. The only students who gained nothing from his courses in composition were the incorrigibly lazy and the incorrigibly commonplace; and even they, perhaps, when their minds stirred in later years, remembered something useful from these early neglected lectures and conferences. It is possibly true, indeed, that many men have only long after realized the value of those hours with Barrett Wendell. He had the happy faculty of putting what he had to say memorably; his phrases linger and their application to life becomes clearer as life itself is better understood.

That was, perhaps, Wendell's outstanding distinction as a teacher — that he made his students feel the inevitable relation between the things he taught and the lives they lived. This is true in the broadest possible sense. His lectures on literature were not designed to enable a student to go out and make his living by teaching, but rather to make the literature discussed a part of the texture of his thought, broadening his vision, sharpening his appreciation, and thus enriching his life. His discussion of English composition was not intended to fit a man to join an advertising firm, but to develop his power of clear thinking by forcing him to express accurately and vividly what was in his mind. That a man could write a better advertisement or deliver a better lecture as a result of this teaching was, so to speak, a by-product of the teaching. Its main object was to develop the man through giving him keener appreciation of the fine and beautiful things of life, thus to broaden and at the same time clarify his vision, and finally, by enabling him to think through a subject, to express his thoughts with precision and vigor.

To those who had the privilege of working in close association with Barrett Wendell there came a new conception of the profession of college instruction. The old idea of the pedagogue rigidly dispensing knowledge in neatly wrapped packages gave place to the idea of the vigorous human being who shared generously with his students his own abundant stores of learning. He was like some vital force giving out light but never satisfied to have those around him act merely as reflectors; he wanted rather to inspire them with his own vitality, that they too might give out light, each according to his own inner power. That individual power was what he strove to cultivate. He never saw his students as a mass to be raised with the same lever, but rather every one as a separate, living problem who would respond to special treatment. That was why he was great in conference, sympathetic with

some, sarcastic with others, tolerant of those who remembered but did not think, eagerly appreciative of those who had ideas of their own which he could so often help them to express. Few there were who realized how unreservedly he gave of his own strength to break down the barriers of diffidence, or inertia, or obstinacy, which bound or choked back the intelligence of the young men who made up his classes.

There was nothing of pedantry in Wendell. It was abhorrent to a man of his essentially modest nature. He could not be pedantic when his purpose in life was far less to teach facts than to give such substance of thought, such ability to express and such eagerness to achieve, that any one of his students might forge ahead of him. He respected them all, unless they were consciously and intentionally lazy or intellectually dishonest, and thereby set a standard of modesty for his assistants. He died young because he had given the strength which most reserve to make his students use their own brains, to make them intellectually independent, to teach them through his own unconscious example the dignity of service, to enable them to be powerful with gentleness, teachers and leaders of men with due humility.

Some scoffed at Wendell, some were afraid of him, a few laughed at him; but his enduring monument is the army of men who were inspired by him to high thinking; who were helped by him to understand the fullness and the richness of life; who, in their turn, have become light-givers.

PROFESSOR WENDELL AND THE  
PHILOSOPHERS



## PROFESSOR WENDELL AND THE PHILOSOPHERS

By DANIEL SARGENT

IT may seem gratuitous to consider Professor Wendell in his relation to philosophers. He did not associate with them, he did not claim himself of them. He called himself "a man of letters." In his teaching of literature, moreover, he was always afraid lest the theories of philosophy might with their little arrogance obscure the mighty pages with which they were concerned. He warned himself against theorists, against theories. I remember with what gently concealed satisfaction he told me that it had been remarked of him by an eminent foreigner that he was notable as the only extant American without a panacea.

His aversion to philosophy was in a sense itself a philosophy. He had elaborated it. An individual man could not feasibly pretend to solve life's mysteries. His span of life was too short. His prejudices were too strong. His fallibility had been proven. His part of wisdom, then, would be to be at least sympathetic to the established creeds which he could not individually accept, and tolerant of traditions which he could not temporarily justify. If an individual man did entertain personal theories, as an individual man must, he should certainly not suppress them. He should treat them hospitably, use them for intellectual commerce with his friends, but remain wary of them. Above all, he should not wreck the world for them, nor torment his well-wishers by them.

But in spite of his intellectual forbearance, Professor Wendell did present certain positive philosophical theories. No course of instruction did he ever give without justifying, to

himself at least, its very existence. Among his papers I happen to have come upon what might be called his justification of his course of English composition. It is on two sheets of letter-paper contained in an envelope with this legend on it: "Final Talk in English 12, 28 May, 1888." The writing, which is so good an example of what he called "thinking, pen in hand," begins thus: "Were English Composition no more than what it is commonly thought, the art of using one's own language decently; were the final result of the study nothing but an increased power of putting words together prettily, I should agree with whoever condemns it as unfit for a university career." What exactly he considers "English composition" to be, is thereupon explained in ten carefully expressed paragraphs which in their final analysis present the thesis that "English composition" is a fine art, and that the teaching of it as such initiates those taught into a wisdom above the limits of the fine art. "And so, I think," he goes on, "this art work of ours teaches us in a way I have hardly suggested to you before, to see what real life is, by learning more than without this training we could learn, to feel, to sympathize with, to penetrate, to attune, the weakness that is the inevitable mark of humanity in the work of even our strongest fellows." Whether it is advisable to seek in this paragraph a definite statement of Professor Wendell's philosophy is a matter of doubt. It was written in 1888, and it is known that his ideas concerning composition, and particularly the teaching of it, underwent a definite change. It is entirely fitting, however, to find in them an evidence of the busily speculative quality of his mind.

Almost all Professor Wendell's courses of lectures came, each of them, ultimately to be embodied in a book. No one of these books is devoid of philosophic interest. Possibly "The Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature," owing to the fact that it was a course of lectures given

in England (at Trinity College, Cambridge), took more upon itself to make a profession of philosophic principles. The lecturer felt that as a stranger he had to introduce himself and his methods. He even defined literature: it was "The lasting expression of the meaning of life."<sup>1</sup> He did not choose to consider it in what he referred to, in deference to "science," as the orthodox way, that of inquiring what surroundings produced this book or that. No, he had grown to think of literature, and care for it, mostly as a temperamental fact. His train of thought leads him to this confession: "So a literature seems to me most interesting, and most significant when we consider it as the unconscious expression of national temper." The more one scrutinizes the kind of delight Professor Wendell felt as he read the books which surrounded him, the more one is convinced that his enjoyment came chiefly from the play of his intellect with theories concerning them. He read Milton in Italy,<sup>2</sup> and was fascinated by the thought (the impression, he calls it) that Milton's images resembled the figures and landscapes of seventeenth-century Italy. Professor Wendell became a philosopher from reading books, but not from reading books on philosophy.

During the last twenty years of his life, he pondered more and more on this puzzle, the relation of history to literature. His lectures on American literature and on comparative literature showed his tireless interest in the subject, and the importance which he considered it to have for others is witnessed to by his insistence that it be made a special field of study for undergraduates at Harvard. Finally he wove his speculations on the matter into a book, "The Traditions of European Literature," which, owing to the fact that it was his last book, and was written under protracted suffering, bears somewhat the relation to his life that a testament would.

<sup>1</sup> *The Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature* (New York, 1904), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

At first sight it might be thought that the theories in the book are few indeed. It bears the mark of being no more than a delightfully written summary of European literature. There is no controversial tone to it. It invites men who live in time to think in terms of time. It points out the undisputed unity of our European, Mediterranean, civilization. It emphasizes how as a matter of fact our best things are those which have been carried on from one generation to another. There is no effervescence of opinion, none of the virile combativeness of theologians. His goal is an immediate one, to teach a definite group of people what they can in a definite amount of time be expected to learn.

But there are philosophic implications of the book which are not on the surface. In the first place, the author by the very choice of his subject confessed that he could not help becoming what by remaining a specialist he need not have been — a philosopher. A specialist who concerns himself entirely with literature can remain complacent with theories which consider literature as a pure self-expression. A specialist who concerns himself entirely with positive history can remain complacent with theories which explain literature as determined by environment. A student of history and literature can preserve no such tranquillity, for he has ceased to be a specialist. He sees an inner world and an outer world. The age-long difficulties of metaphysics are before him. What psychologists study in man the microcosm, a student of history and literature studies in nations and in centuries. Professor Wendell did walk into a philosophical field, into a field of perpetual conflict, and he was quite aware of it, although he preserved that demeanor, superficially indifferent yet fundamentally concerned, which made him so memorable in his quiet progresses through the yard at Harvard University.

Whether Professor Wendell was in small things excitable or not, he was in great things edifyingly calm. He walked

between the opposing armies of specialists as if he were not conscious that they were there. Nor was it that he counted that each army would see in him a friend, that he could so walk, for although it did give him a certain confidence to know that no man could accuse him either of having a romantic idea of literature, or of belittling the prerogatives of the mind, his composure was far more due to the inner good conscience, that he had assumed a task only so great as he was qualified to perform. He would invade no other's province. He would confine himself to a consideration of that extraordinary influence which, exerted on history and literature, does in fact often surpass in importance the directing power of man's judgments or his more tangible environment — I mean those glorious intellectual phantasms, the memory of the past. Was it not true, he asked, that, rightly or wrongly, it was memory rather than reason or riches, that made the European a European, the Malay a Malay, or even the wise wise or the fool a fool? Owing to the fact of the impropriety in so doing, he would not have applied this theory to his own particular case; but if he had, I am of the opinion that he would have attributed his discretion in large measure to the constant sight which he experienced of those ancestors whose pictures he so liked to range upon his wall. It was not that he had inherited great brains from them, nor that he was in intellectual agreement with them; it was that he was unceasingly aware of them. That word "aware" is to him deeply significant. He uses it time and time again. How much he makes of it, for instance, that fifth-century Greece like twentieth-century America was aware of Homer, that modern historians are aware of Thucydides, that the orator of to-day by his tricks of appeal and denunciation is aware of Demosthenes. In his reflections on Dante he emphasizes particularly that the "Divine Comedy" implies, with various degrees of certainty and precision, almost everything on which

we have touched since we first began to collect the traditions of European literature from among the relics of pre-historic Greece. He attributed Dante's greatness to Dante's awareness.

Professor Wendell did not feel himself obliged to confront any such problem as: What is memory? To what extent is it passive? To what extent intellectual? Nor in the phantasms which his memory presented did he care generally to distinguish between what was historically or traditionally true. Under either aspect the past was irrevocable. Traditions were what interested him. He would specialize in them. The truth or falsity of them should concern other specialists. But he was a philosopher in that he insisted on and defended the task which he took upon himself as quite as legitimate as that assumed by the historians often called "scientific." In doing this he performed a service for which, it seems to me, he has not been wholly thanked. In the manner of a positive scientist he laid emphasis on a part of our environment which those who like most to talk about environment most often neglect, and of determining factors which determinists temperamentally avoid. That there were many who considered that he was pursuing mere phantoms, he well knew, and he pleasantly accepted their disdain. I remember, on the other hand, how disappointed he became in a certain young man who, presuming to be his follower, said to him: "But we Americans have no traditions." If the sense of the remark had been to the effect that Americans should not respect traditions, that he could have borne. The offence of the young man lay in his failure to realize that no man can help having traditions, and also in the indirect affront cast at the quality of American traditions. Professor Wendell took a very definite attitude in regard to American traditions. That he did not himself believe in the Calvinistic dogmas could not blind him to the fact that the settlement of New England by those who con-

sidered it a New Canaan was part of a tremendous drama, and that the ideas of those people taken as a tradition were more important as a determining factor in American history than were geographic conditions, or the variety of political and military events.

It can be held, on the other hand, that this very method of Professor Wendell's did tend to make him exaggerate the influence which literature, when it is considered merely as literature, and not as representative of the truth, has exerted upon history. He tells a story in "The Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature" (page 340), which reveals the habit of his own mind: "A few years ago, in an elaborately classified American library, I chanced to look for the 'Pilgrim's Progress' on the shelves appropriated to English literature. Finding no trace of it there, I was driven to search for it in the catalogue, where it presently appeared duly recorded under the heading 'Dogmatic Theology.' After the combined amusement and vexation which accompanied this discovery, I found myself rather disposed to think the classification defensible." The point of the story lies not in the final reluctance to find fault with the catalogue, but in the initial impulse to be amused by it. He had grown so used to thinking of Saint Thomas Aquinas, of Plato, and Aristotle, not as men who had failed or succeeded in quest for immortal truth, but as supremely great manifestations of enduring traditions, that he was in danger of underrating what the most virile generations would find as noteworthy in them. The conscious or unconscious imitation of past literary forms may have a great importance in history and literature, but in history as well as in literature it is indubitably the height of what is considered immortal truth that sends the streams of energy flowing. It is emphatically the contemplation of what is loyally believed that has disciplined the poetic imagination of man. It has been, is, and will be, nothing other than the de-

lighted making incarnate of theological principles, that gives us our poetry and, indeed, our fine arts.

Yet it cannot be denied that the times in which Professor Wendell lived did seem to justify his emphasis on literature as literature. Whatever one may think of Matthew Arnold's notion that what is noblest in European literature should replace dogma, it cannot be doubted that during the last hundred years among an important group of people that very thing has tended to happen. One might say that it would have happened if possibly it could have happened. The story of the process among English-speaking people has been roughly this. Some talented man of letters, owing to a love and envy for aesthetic qualities in ancient English literature, transported into modern English literature a mysticism and supernaturalism, without carrying with them the philosophy and theology that had made them intelligible. The result was, of course, to divorce poetry from reality, and to praise as poetry's chief charm the escape that it provided from the harshness of truth. The consequence to our civilization of this segregation was certainly not what most men would have expected. The pseudo-mysticism and so-called romance, leaving their refuge in poetry, spread through the minds of the nineteenth century with the thoroughness of a plague through people who have acquired no immunity. The reaction on literature would have been logical and complete if literature had either become literature about other literature, or unintelligible. That such is not wholly the case simply shows that what was a tendency was no more than a tendency, though a pervading one. One of its effects as such was not to destroy but to put everything in its wrong place. Many men, for instance, who should have been philosophers became poets, and many men who should have been poets became philosophers. One of these latter was Professor Wendell.

**WHAT IS COMPARATIVE LITERATURE?**



## WHAT IS COMPARATIVE LITERATURE?

By OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL

### I

THE term comparative literature generally provokes emotion. The dilettante greets it effusively. A study with so ample a descriptive title will provide him, he expects, with a short and easy road to an appreciative understanding of all the important modern literatures. The scholar is likely to regard the term with severe disapproval. He suspects that the profession of an interest in comparative literature is a form of intellectual presumption; and he believes the peculiar virtues claimed for its methods and its aims to be identical with those inherent in all scientific studies of literature.

Each of these attitudes is the result, I believe, of certain misconceptions which have naturally arisen from the loose way in which the term has been employed. The inaccurate use of critical terms of all sorts is one of the sources of the confusion at present existing in the entire field of humanistic study. Professor Manly calls this field a "maze without a plan," and believes that "great benefits would apparently result if the different types of investigation and the aims which control them could be more clearly defined."<sup>1</sup> This paper is an attempt to rescue the term "comparative literature" from the confusion which has beset it and to define with some precision that type of literary investigation to which the term is properly applied.

There are several persistent misuses of the term. In catalogues of American universities it is frequently employed to

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Manly, *The Outlook: the Presidential Speech for 1922-23 before the Modern Humanities Research Association*, p. 9.

describe almost any aspect of foreign literature, from Greek drama to Russian fiction, which is studied in English translations. It has also been used to designate a general survey of the masterpieces of European literature, a rapid journey made under expert guidance, from Homer's "Iliad" to George Meredith's "The Egoist." The employment of the term to describe this valuable undergraduate course, instead of the well-established and more accurate terms, "General Literature," or "World Literature,"<sup>1</sup> is a source of much unnecessary confusion. This misuse of the term is not confined to America. Frederic Loliée, in his "L'Histoire de Littératures Comparées des Origines au XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle," published in 1903, writes a history of world literature. His view is that of a cosmopolitan. His narrative is throughout controlled by the conception of a single harmonious world-wide civilization.

Professor George E. Woodberry, in his introductory editorial to the short-lived "Journal of Comparative Literature," definitely adopts this cosmopolitan ideal for his subject. He says: "The study will run its course, and together with other converging elements goes to its goal in the unity of mankind found in the spiritual unities of science, art and love."<sup>2</sup> This noble ideal, not unlike that held by Goethe and his spiritual contemporaries, may produce zeal for the study of comparative literature; it may even be a necessary result of devotion to it;

<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery's *Lectures on General Literature* (1833) is both a discussion of the general laws of poetry and a "Retrospect of Literature from the Earliest Period to the Twelfth Century of the Christian Era." Robert Blakey in 1861 used the title *The History of General Literature* to describe a summary of literature from the earliest times to the seventeenth century. Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, in the 15th, 16th, and 17th Centuries* (1838-1839), followed by the series edited by George Saintsbury on *The Periods of European Literature*, which the editor describes (vol. ii, p. vi) as "something like a new 'Hallam,' which should take account of all the simultaneous and contemporary developments and their interactions" — these works have given general currency to this second term. Moulton's *World Literature and its Place in General Culture* has established this term securely in the vocabulary of modern literary criticism.

<sup>2</sup> *The Journal of Comparative Literature* (New York, 1903), i, 4.

but it is not definite enough to serve as the professed aim of a form of scientific study.

Finally, the term must not be used as a synonym for any sort of mere literary comparison. The indication of likeness and difference between works of art vaguely similar, may be a useful logical and imaginative exercise. As such, it is but a particular manifestation of a universal mode of thought. A comparison of the novels of Jane Austen with those of Maria Edgeworth may be a convenient method of applying aesthetic standards and may lead to clarity of judgment and felicity in expression. Obviously, however, even the systematic employment of this essentially rhetorical device has nothing in common with a scientific method of criticism.

## II

Comparative literature<sup>1</sup> is an infelicitous equivalent of “littérature comparée.” In French, as in the critical vocabulary of other languages, the term clearly indicates that the method, or the history, is comparative, and not the literature. In German the phrase is “vergleichende Literaturgeschichte”; in Danish, “sammenlignende Literaturhistorie”; in Italian, “storia comparata delle letteratura,” or simply “letteratura comparata”; and in Spanish, “literatura comparada.” Each one of these phrases shows beyond doubt that comparative literature is in no sense an independent subject for investigation, but merely one of the scientific methods of studying literature.

M. Baldensperger says that the essence of this method is “la recherche des vivants rapports qui unissent les diverses littératures.” It is generally agreed, as this definition indicates, that the application of the method involves two or more

<sup>1</sup> The best historical account of the use of the term is Fernando Baldensperger's “Littérature Comparée: le mot et la chose,” in *La Revue de Littérature Comparée*, Janvier (Mars, 1921), vol. i, no. 1, pp. 5-29.

literatures. Professor Woodberry, to be sure, who uses the term sometimes as a loose equivalent for any scientific study of literature, says: "Literary history could not be written, the traditions of literature could not be traced without it. . . . The comparative method is the method of all classicism. It is used within the limits of a single literature, as for example the English, where coherence from Caedmon to Milton, from Cynewulf to Longfellow, from Malory to Tennyson, depends upon it." If comparative literature is nothing more than this, — the application of scientific methods of study to literature, — the term is superfluous and a source of critical confusion. It ought in that case never to have been invented and never to be employed.

The term was devised and the science established on the analogy of the comparative biological sciences developed in the early nineteenth century, such as comparative anatomy, comparative physiology, and comparative embryology. If, therefore, it possesses any virtues as a distinctive literary method, they ought to be similar to those existing in the above-mentioned sciences and in certain modern ones formed on their analogy. The comparison in all these sciences is between the structure and the growth of representatives of different species. A comparison of the bones of the human head with those of the human foot might conceivably be called comparative anatomy, but it is not. Furthermore, the comparison of different species is significant only on the assumption that the life of each animal is a part of a widely diffused single process. The purpose of the comparative study based upon these postulates is to discover the morphological explanation of form met with in the animal body, and also to reveal the relations of affinity within the various divisions of the animal kingdom by pointing out what is like and what is unlike. Moreover, in this way facts which are in themselves incomprehensible are, through the methods of comparative anatomy, brought into

connection with the known phenomena of other organisms and are thereby rendered explicable phylogenetically.<sup>1</sup>

Comparative literature by similar methods seeks similar results. It endeavors, in the first place, to discover general laws which transcend any one literature, such as the development of types and forms under the progressive relationships of different literatures. In the second place, it seeks to reveal relations of affinity within two or more literatures. Finally, through the discovery of similarities and differences by means of comparison, it endeavors to explain the inception and growth of individual works. That is, like all scientific studies of literature, our methods are primarily investigations of the process by which a work has come into being and appraisals of the forces which produced this result. In other words, the methods of comparative literature do not seek to produce or enhance aesthetic delight, but rather to create new modes of understanding.

Now, corresponding to the separate species which form the units in the comparative biological sciences are the individual or national literatures of our science. The assumption that a literature, because of its being German, French, or English, possesses certain distinctive qualities is absolutely essential for our method. Therefore, the further assumption must be made that the various racial, political, social, psychological, and linguistic facts which go to the making of a nation go in a different, but analogous fashion, to the making of the literature produced by that nation. Gaston Paris asserts that only in literature is the national life and its spirit made articulate. *Ce n'est que par la littérature qu'il s'exprime, se précise et se fait reconnaître de tous avec enchantement.*<sup>2</sup> The explanation, then, of likenesses and differences revealed by the com-

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this exposition is found in Karl Gegenbauer, *The Elements of Comparative Anatomy*. Translated by F. Jeffrey Bell. Translation revised and preface supplied by E. Ray Lankaster, London, 1878.

<sup>2</sup> *La Poésie du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1885), p. 99.

parative method must be presented in the terms enumerated above, or in others of like import.

The second assumption which the science makes is that all literature is the expression of a common life of the human spirit. This idea was enunciated first by Vico,<sup>1</sup> elucidated by Herder, and has been almost universally adopted since the latter's day. The mentality of all peoples from his time has been regarded as a unity of some sort and literature as one aspect of this universal life. The courses of this common spiritual force have been regarded as continuously modified by circumstances of the sort enumerated above, which can be determined both in their essential nature and in their action. The significance of this conception is not necessarily wedded to the notion that literature is a kind of organic growth with a law of development analogous to that of various species of beings.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact it is just as closely allied to the more recent theories which Professor Manly describes as "treating language and literature as products and implements of man as a social animal."<sup>3</sup>"

### III

An investigation, then, of the living relationships between literatures involves the assumption of the existence of such entities as English, French, and German literatures. However, a nation, in the modern sense of the word, is an essentially recent phenomenon, hardly older than five or six hundred years. The literature of a nation, then, is only the latest example of a relationship which ought to prove as persistent and universal as the existence of literary art. A study of fundamental importance to comparative literature is the investigation of the relation of humane letters to every sort of

<sup>1</sup> In his *Principii di Scienza Nuova*, 1725.

<sup>3</sup> Manly, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> An hypothesis advanced by F. Brunetière in his *L'Evolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature*, Paris, 1900.

social fact in those centuries before nations existed. This is an examination of the validity of those relationships upon which the entire structure of the comparative study of literature is built.

The first study of this sort, both in point of time and in importance, is the investigation of the origins of poetry. Professor Gummere, in the standard work on this subject,<sup>z</sup> not only establishes some of the laws of literary origins, but, in his search for them, uses a modification of the methods of comparative literature. He compares the early forms of rhythmic utterance of savage tribes widely separated in time and place, substituting primitive social groups for the nations employed in the completed method. When he discovers that certain facts and relationships remain stable in the midst of all the differences discovered in his process, he believes that they can safely be pronounced to be established laws of the genesis of literature.

The conclusions reached by Professor Gummere, moreover, are of great importance for the study. If, as he believes, poetry in its origin is a form of communal consent, a signalization of social cohesion,—if it is, in other words, a form of spontaneous expression, springing from a homogeneous body of people,—then it is a fair assumption that literature, whatever changes it may undergo, is an aspect of social life, and without some form of social organization it would never come into being. Literature, in this case, whatever its character, like religion, law, and custom, must continue to be, in a measure, the product of the ideas and emotions of the nation and the epoch from which it springs. One need not assert with Taine that a work of modern literature is a sort of automatic register of "*race, milieu, and moment*," to believe that no man of letters can emancipate himself from the influence of his social environment and the spirit of his age.

<sup>z</sup> Francis B. Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, New York, 1901.

Nor do the cogent objections of Miss Louise Pound to the theories of the communal composition of primitive song militate against the conceptions of the relations of art to society, which the student of comparative literature must accept. She seeks to recreate the primitive artist and to disentangle him from the festal dancing throng, which in turn is relieved of its supposed spontaneous improvisation. Yet she writes: "The general social inspiration of song is not to be denied. In a broad sense, all art is a social phenomenon — the romanticists to the contrary." \*

On the other hand, the theories of art of M. Tarde,<sup>2</sup> when vigorously applied to literature, destroy the proper field for the exercise of the methods of comparative literature. He believes that all forms of social activity, of which literature is one, are the result of imitation. Rhythmic utterance, to him, is not the instinctive expression of a common emotion, but the invention of some man of genius. This man's work the crowd eagerly imitates. Men act alike, not from any instinct equally diffused among all the members of a crowd, but because they have all imitated the same inventive genius. Social evolution of all sorts, including that of literature, is from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous. Genius of a race, of a nation, of a time, as a formative element of any work of art is, to such a theorist, simply non-existent.

This individualistic theory of artistic origins has been applied to literature by Émile Hennequin in his "Critique Scientifique."<sup>3</sup> After presenting a number of authors of completely different sorts living in the same nation at the same time, such as Swinburne, Browning, and Tennyson, he comes to the following conclusion: "On voit qu'il est impossible d'établir un rapport entre une société et les artistes qui l'ill-

\* *Poetic Origins and the Ballad* (New York, 1912), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Developed in *Les Lois d'Imitation*, 1890, and *Les Lois Sociales*, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> *La Critique Scientifique*, 3d ed., Paris, 1894. Cf. particularly the chapter on "Analyse Sociologique," pp. 93 ff.

lustrent." True to M. Tarde's theories of imitation, he says: "Une littérature exprime une nation, non parce-que celle-ci l'a produite, mais parce-que celle-ci l'a adoptée et admirée."<sup>1</sup> Therefore the relation of a work of literature to society can be studied only through the popularity of a book. The degree to which society accepts a work of literature is a measure of the extent to which it imitates the work and of the degree of similarity between the ideals of a society and those of the work in question. The individual, however, creates literature according to laws of his own mind, the nature of which must remain largely obscure.

These social theories and their application to literature make futile any study of the growth of a work of art. They are, therefore, largely destructive, not only of the methods of comparative literature, but also of all scientific study of art. These conflicting views show of how great importance to comparative literature is the study of literary origins. It is an investigation of the validity of the principles and relationships upon which the entire science is founded.

#### IV

Of similar significance to comparative literature is the study of folk-lore, mythography, and comparative mythology. In investigating primitive belief, superstition, taboo, or jest, one is dealing with the material out of which early literature is constructed. Professor Gummere says picturesquely that one of the first tasks of comparative literature was "to follow the fortunes of a primitive bagman's jest, carried on the old trading routes from land to land and starting up at last as *conte* or *schwank* in a hundred scattered communities in cloister, school, and court."<sup>2</sup> Professor Woodberry says that

<sup>1</sup> Hennequin, *op. cit.*, p. 162. M. Baldensperger, in *La Littérature* (Paris, 1913), adopts, in substance, this point of view. He quotes this second sentence with approval, and adds: "Si les littératures ne sont pas nationales, elles le deviennent."

<sup>2</sup> *The Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 352.

one of the principal objects inviting the attention of our science is "the common matter of literature either in simple forms, as in the ballad, or in complex forms, as in the so-called matter of Britain, matter of France, matter of Troy, with a view to displaying parallel developments of the same substance in different ages and countries."<sup>1</sup>

Doubt has often been expressed whether this material could properly be called literature. Baldensperger admits that it "déborde hors de la littérature proprement dite."<sup>2</sup> Brunetière says: "Entre le Petit Poucet et la Divine Comédie, par exemple, ou le Petit Chaperon Rouge et le Faust de Goethe, ou même celui de Marlowe, n'y a-t-il vraiment qu'une différence de degrés."<sup>3</sup> However, this question has no bearing on the importance of a study of folk-lore to comparative literature. In the first place, through an application of the comparative method to this material, we are able to estimate the relation of social superstition and communal reactions toward the facts of nature to primitive literary forms. Professor Kittredge has illustrated the value of this phase of the study in his "Gawain and the Green Knight." By tracing the story back to its simplest form, and comparing that to the best artistic version, he is able to discover that of its two principal constituents, one is a form of primitive belief, the other one of primitive custom. The first is a belief that a serpent is not killed when its head is severed, but that, if it can effect a union with its body, it will resume its life; the second, the custom of exchanging buffets. Such an investigation is of fundamental importance for our scientific method because it shows that this romance, at least, did not have its origin in the brain of an inventive story-teller, but in the customs and superstitions of the folk.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Comparative Literature*, i, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> "La Littérature Européenne," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept., 1900, vol. 373, p. 328.

Folk themes can furthermore serve as the stable element in works of different literatures under comparison. Brunetière defines this phase of the study as follows: "Si le Petit Poucet, par exemple, nous est venu de l'Inde, comme les uns le veulent, il y a lieu de rechercher comment, par quelles voies, il est arrivé jusqu'à nous et comment, en quel sens, tout le long de sa route, le génie des races qui se l'appropriaient successivement en a modifié les détails, ou peut-être même le fond."<sup>1</sup> So in Professor Kittredge's book, by comparing the story of the champion's bargain as it appears (*a*) in the primitive folk-lore, (*b*) in the crude Irish tale, and (*c*) in the sophisticated romance of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," we are able to discover the differences in the successive forms of the theme and to explain them in the terms which comparative literature has made its own.

These two sorts of studies, dealing with the social origins of literature and with the constituent elements of its simplest forms, are in a sense preliminary to the main and central method of comparative literature. This presupposes the existence of nations and of an ascertainable relationship between a nation and its literature. It then proceeds to the comparison of two works of literature, or the entire work of two authors belonging to different nations or races. The two parts of this comparison must obviously possess some common element. This may be of various sorts. One work or one author may show the direct influence of the other, for example, or both may embody the same theme, and so forth.

## V

Such a comparison may be undertaken for various reasons: first, to discover differences, which can be explained in terms of age, race, nation, literary tradition, or literary convention.

<sup>1</sup> "La Littérature Européenne," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept., 1900, vol. 373, p. 328.

The facile attribution of national or racial characteristics to any author or any work of literature is, of course, in the highest degree unscientific. Baldensperger shows this danger as follows: "Comment voir dans Mathurin Regnier un représentant absolu de l'esprit gaulois, s'il a emprunté à l'Arioste sa conception même de la satire. Comment retrouver dans le théâtre de Schiller le génie allemand dans sa plus haute incarnation d'art, si la formule dramatique dont il s'inspire est nettement celle de Voltaire ou de Diderot."<sup>1</sup> It is precisely the comparative method which will prevent the critic from making such ill-founded generalizations. Only after a scientific comparison of the work in question, with its various sources or analogues in foreign literatures, is the critic able to attribute to it distinctive characteristics, which then invite explanation.

Mere source-hunting, however, even though it be international in character, is at its best but an incompletely exhibited of the method of comparative literature. As a preliminary to the judgments which the investigator seeks to formulate, the determination of the extent and nature of the borrowings of one author from others, or of his imitation of others, is an indispensable process. However, such investigation, in the last analysis, is of value only as it leads the critic to discover differences which seem original qualities, and similarities much more fundamental than those due to mere imitation. Yet without the many thorough and ranging investigations of sources that have been already made, the goal of comparative literature would still be obscure.

Professor Gummere in a passage from which I have already quoted says: "Comparative literature, as a science, is young. The task before its followers was plain enough; they had first of all to sift the material, to note where deep has called unto deep in the influence of one poet upon another. . . . But

<sup>1</sup> *La Littérature*, p. 291.

this is not all, and the task is not done even when one has struck a balance between the borrowings of a poet and what one suffers to pass as his individual and original genius. Abused as the terms have been, the genius of time, place, and community is still a factor in the growth of any literature." It is, then, one of the functions of comparative literature to discover by its own clearly defined method what part these forces have played in the formation of specific works of literature.

The aims of this branch of the study are various. In the first place, it may seek to determine the relation of a work of literature or the entire work of one author to race or to nation. This leads us, on the one hand, to the borders of a science still in its infancy, which may be called, for want of a better term, psychological anthropology. Anthropologists until recently have been exclusively interested in external and thoroughly tangible facts, such as measurements of heads and cranial shapes. Psychologists like McDougall believe that the same kind of scientific study can be applied to the more elusive, but no less real and stable, psychological characteristics of race.

Furness in his Variorum edition of "As You Like It" makes the following characteristic utterance: "If all degrees of surprise had not been, for me, long ago exhausted concerning Shakespeare . . . I should be inclined to wonder that the students of anthropology, instead of adopting various standards, such as Facial Angles, Cranological Measurements, and the like, had not incontinently adopted one of Shakespeare's Comedies, as the supreme and final test in determining nationality, at least as between the Gallic, the Teutonic and the Anglo-Saxon races." <sup>x</sup> The distinctive qualities in this work which Furness would make the test of nationality could be made to emerge most surely through the comparative method,

<sup>x</sup> *As You Like It*, Variorum edition (1890), p. vi.

for example, by comparing Shakespeare comedy with George Sand's "Comme Il Vous Plaira," and certain German redactions of "As You Like It."

A second object of inquiry in this phase of the subject is to determine the effect of social facts upon the formation of a work of literature. This sort of study assumes that the customs and ideals of the social group from which the work springs have a positively formative influence upon it. The word "social" is of course to be taken in its largest signification. The English nation, and French nation, as these terms are used in literary inquiry, signify not political unities so much as societies bound together by custom and tradition. Qualities established as distinctive by the comparative method may be regarded as products either of the immediate social milieu of the composing author, or of those national traditions and conventions of thought and expression which form what Gaston Paris calls the patrimony of any national literature.

A third object of inquiry through the scientific establishment of distinctive differences between related works in different languages is to determine the formative effect of political facts. This aspect of the subject does not need explanation.

## VI

The typical comparisons of comparative literature may be undertaken not only to detect differences, but also to discover and to explain similarities apparent only after the application of the method. The explanation of the existence of these similarities may lead to the formulation of answers to such questions as the following: Are there any fixed laws of literary generation, and if so, what are they? Why do certain types of literature appear and flourish at certain times and not at all during other epochs? Why, for example, did lyric poetry flourish in early Greek times, in Elizabeth's Eng-

land and in France of the nineteenth century? Why did tragedy flourish at Athens in the fifth and fourth century B.C., in Elizabethan England, and in the France of Louis XIV?<sup>1</sup>

We may next seek to discover if there are any fixed laws governing the life of a literary genre. Were Brunetière and J. A. Symonds right in asserting that the life of any artistic movement follows a course analogous to the life-history of any biological species?<sup>2</sup> In other words, is there such a phenomenon as evolution in literature, or is the phrase merely a convenient figure of speech?

In this effort to explain similarities, we may also seek to discover fixed laws of the relationships between literature and various sorts of social fact. H. M. Posnett, for example, wrote an entire book<sup>3</sup> in an endeavor to show that there are invariable characteristics inherent in all literature emanating from a clan group, from a city-state, from a cosmopolitan society, and from a self-conscious nation. He attempts to prove, for example, that whenever a man loses his sense of social personality and thereby frees himself from all clearly defined moral and social sanctions, his literature always displays certain identical characteristics. These same qualities appear in the Greece of Alexander the Great, in the Rome of the Empire, and in the Germany of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Such generalizations as these can be formulated and tested only through the employment of the particular mode of comparative study now under consideration.

Still wider generalizations about the life of literature may result from this study. Brunetière believed that certain fixed

<sup>1</sup> This is the branch of the subject which H. U. Routh, in a recent article, thinks most promising. See "The Future of Comparative Literature," in the *Modern Language Review*, vol. iii, no. 1, pp. 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> F. Brunetière, *L'Evolution de la poésie lyrique en France au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris, 1894, 2 vols.), especially vol. i, pp. 3-42; also J. A. Symonds, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* (London, 1890, 2 vols.), especially the chapter "On the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art and Literature."

<sup>3</sup> *Comparative Literature*, 1886.

laws governing the growth of European literature, regarded as a larger entity, might be discovered. He postulates the existence of a European literature "dont les littératures particulières ou nationales ne seraient, dans l'histoire de notre moderne Europe, que des manifestations locales et successives."<sup>1</sup> He believed that the methods of comparative literature, for example, might define and, as it were, codify the laws of mediaeval literature. Then the laws by which these characteristics were bequeathed to the Renaissance and transformed by its spirit into a new sort of literature might be formulated and tested. The laws of other periods in the life of European literature might be similarly discovered. Finally, this particular method may lead to the discovery of invariable spiritual qualities in man which are always revealed in his literature. Independent of time, place, and circumstance, these qualities reach out in sympathy across less fundamental differences of race and nation. The discovery of such universal human traits seems to modern internationalists fraught with immense significance for the future of mankind. One remembers, in this connection, Professor Woodberry's belief that the study of comparative literature is one of the most potent forces in the world making for the spiritual unity of man.

## VII

Finally, the application of either of the methods of comparative literature which have just been described, or preferably of each in succession, will lead to a residue in every work which constitutes its originality. Some of this precious quality is doubtless the expression of phases of the author's personality which can be explained by familiar methods of biographical criticism. Something will remain, however, even after this subtraction, which can be sensed only by an act of

<sup>1</sup> "La Littérature Européenne," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Sept., 1900), vol. 373, pp. 326, 327.

imaginative intuition. It is this aspect of a work of literature which critics from Hegel to Croce believe to be its essential artistic character and the only fit subject for the attention of the critic. To be sure, those disposed to cavil believe that the preliminary processes of analysis render impossible the final act of aesthetic criticism. Hennequin takes this point of view. He says: "L'Œuvre d'art résolue dans ses effets et ses moyens cesse d'être une œuvre d'art. A cet état de décomposition . . . elle est un mécanisme inefficace, une machine démontée."<sup>2</sup> From this view the student of comparative literature dissents. He does not believe that his analysis prevents him from feeling "the very pulse of the machine."

One need not believe in the parliament of man to see large possibilities in the increasing application of the methods of comparative science to literature. Much of the preliminary work upon which its investigations depend has been completed. The historical inventories of the various national literatures are nearly complete; the tracing of influences across the lines of nationality has long occupied the attention of many scholars. Moreover, such sciences as anthropology, sociology, and social psychology are reaching a point of development where they can contribute necessary facts to the comparative critic and furnish him with suggestive methods of investigation. The time seems ripe for some synthesis of this material made under the control of rigorous scientific method.

Against the dangers of error in these methods the student must be constantly on his guard. He may be tempted to make speedy and ill-supported generalizations, to enunciate theses too sweeping or too tenuous to be established by any sort of evidence. Yet to fear these errors is partially to avoid them; and premature generalization and wild assertion need not bring into disrepute the sort of strictly scientific and

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 166 and 167.

copiously supported generalization that the critic hopes to make at the end of a long comparative study of facts. The method demands a wide knowledge of languages and acquaintance with many literatures, as well as familiarity with some of the contributory sciences. These difficulties ought to issue a healthful challenge to the ambitious student, because the laborers in the field are as yet comparatively few, and the harvest seems to be very great.

## THE SIX CENTURIES SINCE DANTE



## THE SIX CENTURIES SINCE DANTE

By H. W. L. DANA

WITHIN the sombre tranquillity of the Boston Athæum, sitting in the little room kept there as a memorial to Barrett Wendell, and looking out of the window over the old Granary Burying Ground below, I find my thoughts almost inevitably wandering back across the literature of those centuries that Mr. Wendell had been genially and serenely surveying in this very room so shortly before his death.

For during the last years of his life, Mr. Wendell had turned more and more away from those specified fields of literary study which he had earlier made his own,—Elizabethan Literature or American Literature, for example,—and had declared that he found a larger satisfaction in that general outlook over world literature as a whole which he came to give as a course of lectures at Harvard University. This much-discussed course, gradually developed from 1904 to 1917, was officially known by the various designations: “Comparative Literature 1,” “Comp. Lit. 1,” “or C. L. 1,” but was sometimes irreverently dubbed “Seeing Literature,” as if the students were being conducted on a sight-seeing car rapidly across the centuries while Professor Wendell chatted amiably about the monuments of literature they were passing on the way: “Here you can see Homer . . . we are now coming to Virgil,” and so forth. As a matter of fact, the course ultimately came to something much more significant than the disjointed comment that this crude simile suggests. It became an opportunity of gathering together such scattered bits of information on European culture as we students might chance to possess or to have acquired from other courses

and of viewing them in perspective as a whole, or, as Mr. Wendell used to say, of "thinking things together instead of scrutinising them apart." He shrewdly saw our need in the broken, staccato world of to-day for some sort of synthesis. In an age of growing specialization, Mr. Wendell came more and more to specialize in generalization.

After his retirement, in 1918, from college teaching, Mr. Wendell set to work, for the most part in this little room in the corner of the library of the Boston Athenæum which had been handed over to him for the purpose, turning the material which he had given as lectures into the more permanent form of a book. In November, 1920, just three months before his death, the first part of this book, corresponding to the first half-year of Comparative Literature I, was published, under the title, "The Traditions of European Literature," with the subtitle, "Homer to Dante." It was the year in which had appeared H. G. Wells's "Outline of History" — an appeal to the post-war love of generalization, so largely emphasizing the place of science in the history of civilization but so sadly deficient in treating the place of literature. Mr. Wendell's book more than supplemented that deficiency. From the eighth century B.C. to the thirteenth century A.D. he has linked literary traditions with historical traditions. He was a man of letters and acquainted with life. His book has helped to make the humanities human.

No sooner was this first volume published than Mr. Wendell, with increasing courage in his struggle against decreasing strength, bravely began work on the second volume, which was to have corresponded to the second half-year of Comparative Literature I, and to have continued the survey of European literature from the death of Dante until to-day. He had begun with Petrarch, and here there still lie on the table where he was writing, two large vellum-bound volumes of Petrarch, the edition of 1581, upon which he had been working.

Then came Mr. Wendell's death on February 8, 1921 — the very year when we were celebrating the six-hundredth anniversary of the death of Dante. The first volume of his book, which had carried the story of world literature down to the time of Dante, had ended with one of those illuminating phrases characteristic of Mr. Wendell, anticipating the centuries of transition from Dante to the present to be covered in the concluding volume, and at the same time opening a sort of cosmic vista upon a more distant future: "The world from which our world has emerged into what for the while we call modernity."

Hitting upon that last word as a key, he had, on beginning the forever unfinished volume which would have included the six hundred years since Dante's death, jotted down for it a tentative subtitle: "Six Centuries of Modernity." It is a survey of these centuries that I have rashly ventured to take as the subject of this paper: "Six Centuries of Modernity."

For the bulk of this projected volume there remain only the barest headings on those manila cards which Mr. Wendell used to shuffle on the desk before him as he lectured. All the substance could have been filled in only by Mr. Wendell himself. For anyone else to attempt to complete the work would be the height of indiscretion — though perhaps this need not check a follower of one who used to say that whatever success he had had as a teacher was the result of his indiscretions.

Without attempting the impertinence of venturing to survey these six centuries since the death of Dante from all points of view, it is tempting to glance over them from a single aspect, from the way in which they have departed more and more from that world of Dante which Mr. Wendell sums up at the end of the first part of his book. In surveying the six centuries of modernity from this limited angle, some phrases, some suggestions have no doubt lingered as echoes from Mr. Wendell's unpublished lectures. Other ideas, however, and

the phrasing of them, he would no doubt have completely repudiated as expressions of his own views, though I believe he might have generously welcomed them as expressions of another, and perhaps diametrically opposite, point of view. For where Mr. Wendell may elegiacally lament the gradual loss of the nobler traditions of the past, some of us may more eagerly welcome the coming of the new. Yet none can deny how completely the world of Dante which Mr. Wendell depicts has been changed.

In taking Dante, then, as the point of departure and glancing rapidly over the six centuries of the modern world since his death one fact at least seems clear. For better or worse, all those things which Dante held dear have been challenged. His idealized love of woman; his twofold world government, temporal and spiritual, of Emperor and Pope; his threefold crystallization of the other world into Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise; his faith in the existence of a soul apart from the body; even his belief in the freedom of the will — all these have, one by one, during these six centuries been called into question.

Already in the fourteenth century and in Italy itself we find a change. The two other Italian writers, Petrarch and Boccaccio, who with Dante form the great triumvirate of the Trecento, serve to illustrate this transition. Both born before the death of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio mark before their own deaths how far Europe has already progressed — or should we say declined — toward "modernity."

In the first place, what is their attitude toward the love of woman? In the "Divine Comedy" Dante had written of Beatrice what had never been written of any woman. Compared to this ethereally spiritualized love, poor Petrarch's troubled love for Laura seems mixed with all manner of worldly considerations, and Boccaccio's impatient love for

Fiammetta frankly carnal in its passion. As Mr. Wendell used to say, where Dante's love was heavenly, Petrarch's seems worldly, and Boccaccio's of the earth earthy. The very names of the women seem symbols of this difference. "Beatrice" seems to signify the giver of blessing, of blessedness, of beatitude. "Laura" seems an emblem of the laurel, of the wreath of worldly fame longed for by the poet "laureate." "Fiammetta," alas, seems to suggest a "little flame," a spark soon extinguished. Dante's Beatrice stands out against a golden background like some saint painted by Giotto. Petrarch's Laura walks lightly across a background of "chiare, fresche e dolci acque," like Botticelli's Spring. Boccaccio's Fiammetta sits upon the balcony with her pets, like the courtesans depicted by Carpaccio.

Unlike Beatrice, who lifts Dante toward God, Laura seems to draw Petrarch away from God. He is forever torn asunder and in his sonnets and canzone "the first modern man" analyzes — or, should we say, psycho-analyzes? — his neurotic and erotic emotions. Still further removed from the hold of religion, Boccaccio gives himself over to his passion, troubled only by Fiammetta's fickleness — and his own.

The significant historical fact is that Petrarch and Boccaccio, far more than Dante, seem to have set the stamp for our centuries of modernity. While no one has successfully imitated the "Divina Commedia," think of the thousands and thousands of sonnets in every land built on the Petrarchan model. It was not Dante's "terza rima" but Boccaccio's "ottava rima" which became the characteristic metre of Ariosto, of Tasso, of Byron. And what was true of the form was true of the substance. It was the prose stories of the "Decameron" which became the great storehouse from which Renaissance, Elizabethan, and modern story-tellers, dramatists, and poets were to draw their plots.

Apart from their better-known work, Petrarch and Boc-

caccio, to be sure, have both written works in "terza rima" imitating the "Divine Comedy," but in both cases the resemblance merely serves to emphasize the differences. In Petrarch's "Trionfi," the triumph of Laura over Love, of Fame over Death, and of Divinity over Time, show us once more Petrarch divided between his mediæval love of religion, his Renaissance love of fame, and his modern love of woman. In Boccaccio's "Amorosa Visione," the fair lady who guides him to the castle, urges him to enter a narrow door leading to the way of life. But Boccaccio catches sight of a larger door to the left, from which sounds of festivity are issuing, and instead of obeying his guide implicitly, as Dante had, he insists on entering through this broad door. "Let us go and see the false gods first," he argues; "the desire for the true will then be all the dearer." It is significant, however, that though the vision describes in great detail the Hall of Love and the Garden of Pleasure, Boccaccio never reaches the strait and narrow gate. This vision seems to mark the turning-point. In Boccaccio's amiable defiance of his guide we already feel the note of modernity.

A further indication of the break from mediæval tradition, if any were needed, could be found in the changed attitude toward the classical and the biblical, the Hellenic and the Hebraic, traditions. Dante, who was the voice of ten silent centuries, the centuries without Greek, though he did not hesitate to spoil the Egyptians as best he could, kept the pagan element still duly subservient to the Christian. Familiar as he was with Latin, he was, of course, ignorant of Greek. Petrarch caught more of the pagan spirit and held as his proudest possession the manuscripts of Homer and of Plato, which he would gaze on with rapture even if he could not unaided read them in the original. Finally Boccaccio, mastering some Greek, ventured to write even in his Italian works on Greek subjects, *Troilus and Theseus*, for example, and to give to his

Italian writings would-be Greek titles — “Filocolo,” “Filistrato,” “Decamerone.” The revival of the classics was serving to weaken the hold of the biblical tradition.

With the coming of the fifteenth century and the Italian humanists this tendency increases. Even before the fall of Constantinople, the flood of Greek scholars and their “brown Greek manuscripts” has waxed, and the undisputed predominance of the church is waning. The handmaid of theology assumes the manners of the mistress. By the middle of the century the invention of printing seemed to help the revival of the classics more than it did the survival of the church. As Victor Hugo said of the printing press and the cathedral: “Ceci tuera cela!”

By the end of the century the discovery of the new world, quite as much as this rediscovery of the old world, seemed to lead us still further from Dante and nearer to modernity. Already Dante had imagined his Ulysses as sailing beyond the Pillars of Hercules for five months over the sea, till he came in sight of an island on the other side of the world. For Dante this was no other than the island where was situated the mountain of Purgatory. Now, nearly two centuries after Dante, another Italian, inspired by this and other passages, actually sails across the Atlantic; but the land Columbus discovers is not Purgatory but America — unless you wish to feel that America is to-day a sort of Dantesque Purgatory.

This and subsequent explorations in the western hemisphere seem to dispose of a literal belief in the presence there of either a mountain of Purgatory or an earthly Paradise. Now you may say, what matter if the exact geographical location of Purgatory is upset, so long as the doctrine itself, the central part of Dante’s scheme of the universe, remains unchallenged? But at the beginning of the next century, the

sixteenth, with the growing Protestant revolt, it is precisely this belief in the intermediate state that is, among other things, rejected by Protestantism.

The other things were equally devastating to Dante's unified scheme. In his eagerness to see the world united in one faith, Dante had praised the zeal with which a Saint Dominic and his "dogs of the Lord" had hounded out the Albigensian heresy. But now Germany, England, almost the whole of northern Europe were breaking away from the authority of the Pope, and the world was as sadly torn asunder in its spiritual dominion as Dante had already found it in its political dominion. The hope of a united Christendom seemed further than ever away.

Even in Catholic Italy itself, the prevailing spirit seems diametrically opposed to that of Dante two centuries earlier. Even the Medici Pope himself, Leo X, seems more intent on reestablishing the reign of Apollo and Minerva than that of Christ and his saints, and in an expedition to the near east is more interested in the finding of Greek manuscripts than in the discovery of the Holy Sepulchre.

If this seems far from Dante's ideal of the head of the Church, Machiavelli's "Prince" of the same period is equally far from Dante's conception of the head of the State. Instead of its being love that moves the sun and the other stars, Machiavelli assures us that in the modern world of affairs it is not love but fear which is the moving force over other men. It is not necessary actually to have the seven Christian virtues: it is necessary only to appear to have them. This realism of "Il Principe," far more than the idealism of the "De Monarchia," has been the guiding principle of the succeeding centuries of modernity.

The popular court poet of early sixteenth-century Italy, Ariosto, seems to take a special delight in ridiculing Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso*. In "Orlando Furioso," the grotesque

knight, Astolfo, in search of Orlando's lost wits, timidly enters Hell. There, in place of the souls of carnal sinners who had yielded to the temptations of the flesh, he finds those prudes and ingrates who had refused to yield. Instead of passing all through Hell like Dante, Astolfo reaches only this first circle and flees from this with a motion more like running than walking. Similarly, instead of ascending through all the ten spheres of Dante's Paradise, Astolfo gets no further than the first — that on the moon. Here, according to Ariosto, all things lost on earth have fled, which gives him a chance to indulge in a quite modern satire on politicians' broken promises, on treaties that are only scraps of paper, on the lost wits of lunatic poets, and so forth, and so forth.

In France at this same time, Rabelais' point of view is still more a reversal of Dante's. The whole Abbaye de Thélème, with its motto over the gate, "Fay ce que tu vouldras," is the monastic world of Dante's day turned topsy-turvy. The imaginary journey culminates not in the empyrean and the harmonies of Heaven, but in the Oracle of the Bottle and the voice crying "Trinc." Rabelais makes the dead soldier Epistemon, when his head is sewed on and his throat loosened with drink, give us an account of the realm of the dead to which he had gone; but instead of representing their fate as a perpetuation of the life they had led on earth, he pictures the dead as finding in the afterworld the exact opposite of what we might expect. A ne'er-do-well scapegrace like Villon is there clad as a mighty lord, while a world conqueror like Alexander is patching old clothes. Brutus and Cassius are surveying land, while Julius Cæsar is caulking ships.

In England a young dramatist takes a similar delight in fancying how Alexander looked and smelt after death and in imagining "imperial Cæsar dead and turned to clay." For Dante, Cæsar as the founder of empire was sacred, and the conspirators who put him to death were fitly doomed to the

lowest pit of Hell, there to be munched to all eternity in the jaws of Satan. But now, some three centuries later, comes this English playwright who dares so far to reverse the judgment of time as to make of Brutus the hero of a play and to have it said of him: "This was the noblest Roman of them all."

These reversals of judgment, you may argue, concern only Dante's earthly plans, only things on the surface of our world. Out beyond, men still believed in the existence of that great crystal universe, concentric sphere in sphere enfolding the earth. Even Shakespeare hears the music of the spheres. But soon this too was to go. In Dante's own native Florence, three centuries after his death, Galileo, searching the planets and the fixed stars through his telescope, reverses the whole geocentric conception of the universe which Dante held. Instead of the stationary earth being the centre about which the sun and the other stars revolve, the earth is now looked upon as but one of many planets circling about the sun which in turn is but one of many suns. Dante's closed concentric crystal universe is shattered into bits, and our globe becomes but a bit of star dust far flung in infinite space. As Columbus by his voyage to the other side of the world seemed to have shaken men's faith in the presence of Dante's Purgatory there, so Galileo, voyaging in his mind through the sky, seemed to shake men's faith in the existence then of Dante's ten heavens. The conception of the universe which had substantially held its own from Aristotle to Dante gives place to that of modernity, the Ptolemaic to the Copernican. For it is practically the universe as we conceive it to-day which

Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At evening, from the top of Fesolé.

The English poet who wrote those verses had, when in Italy, visited the aged Galileo, and now, himself grown old and blind

and fallen on evil days, had built in "Paradise Lost" a poem which some have felt in its high seriousness a return across the literature of Ariosto and Rabelais to the conceptions of Dante himself. But a close comparison merely tends to show how wide the breach has become. It is not only that Milton accepts, at least in part, the cosmogony of Galileo, but in eliminating all Purgatory and placing his Hell outside our universe, below it as Heaven is above it, with typical Puritan dualism he makes mankind a battle-ground between Heaven and Hell, between God and Satan, and makes virtue consist not so much in love as in obedience. Instead of a forward vision toward the ultimate results of good and evil, he looks back at the origin of evil and at "Man's first disobedience."

But there are other respects in which Milton's divergence from Dante is greater still. Milton is a double rebel against both heads of Dante's two-headed eagle of power, Papacy and Monarchy. Against the Pope his revolt as a Puritan is the "dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion." Against the king, he is an active rebel and the great apologist of rebellion. If he does not make of a Brutus the hero of a tragedy, he gives all his strength, his learning, his eyesight to the cause of the regicides. We have come far already from the days of Dante, but we are to come farther still.

The ~~eighteenth century~~, the age of prose and reason, was to see the ideas for which Dante had striven assailed from many angles and in many different ways. Dante in Paradise was catechized by Saint Peter on the one and indivisible faith. Swift in "The Tale of the Tub" distributes the coats of religion to Martin and Jack as well as to Peter — to Lutheran and Calvinist as well as to Catholic. Dante's imaginary journey ended with the beatific vision of the great rose where the souls of redeemed mankind are enthroned. "Gulliver's Travels"

ends with the most bitter picture ever penned of unredeemed and unredeemable mankind — the Yahoos. Alexander Pope turns deliberately away from the other world — “presume not God to scan” — and tells us that our proper study is precisely this high-heeled, periwigged, patched and powdered thing called man. Gibbon, “sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,” smiles down from the Alps upon the ruins of Rome and, pretending to aim at the Roman Empire, hits the Roman Church. Not far away the patriarch of Ferney, Voltaire, in the name of toleration was muttering, “*Écrasez l’infame!*” Jean Jacques Rousseau, far from agreeing that man was born in sin and redeemed only through the institution of the church, was alluringly asserting that man was born free and was naturally good, and that it was only through our institutions that he degenerates. The French *philosophes* were tearing down the world of faith only to build up an equally rigid world of reason. The “*Encyclopédie*” was to be the new Bible. The French Revolution, just at the time it became most unreasonable, turned “*la Raison*” into a goddess — and an actress into “*la Raison.*” Monarch, Pope, Hell, Purgatory, Paradise — all that Dante cared for — seemed to have been swept into the dust-bin. What remained?

Whatever remained of Dante’s universe after the French Revolution, the nineteenth century was soon to poetize or analyze away. Shelley, hearing “the voice which is contagion to the world,” arouses the sleeping Demogorgon to hurl the monarch-god from his throne, and Prometheus is unbound. Byron, assuming a Satanic pose, champions the very characters — Satan, Cain, the Corsair, Manfred, Don Juan — whom Dante doomed, or would have doomed, to Hell. (Goethe) cries: “Drive far from you the greenish smoke of Dante’s Hell!” If it seems to you that his Mephistopheles has some of that same greenish smoke about him, note the

difference. In the scriptures it is the voice of the Almighty which says, "Thou Shalt Not!" Here it is Mephistopheles who is "der Geist der stets verneint" — who gives us the Everlasting Nay. On account of its scope, "Faust" has been called a "Modern Divine Comedy," but the emphasis should perhaps be more on the Modern than on the Divine. It seems at times as if Goethe were intentionally turning things about. While Dante passes from Hell, through Purgatory on the surface of the world, up to Heaven, Goethe begins with a Prologue in Heaven and tells us that his drama is to proceed in precisely the reverse order:

Vom Himmel, durch die Welt, zur Hölle.

If Faust ultimately redeems himself from Hell and is allowed instead to enter Heaven, it is not by humbly submitting his will to that of God and muttering, "E la sua voluntade è nostra pace." On the contrary, it is his stubborn unwillingness to yield, his divine discontent, his ceaseless, ever-unsatisfied striving which is the best hope he has. His ultimate redemption comes not from a beatific vision of "the splendor of the living light eternal," but from a constructive vision of a reclaimed bit of this earth where many millions are ever working to earn afresh the freedom they have won,

Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.

It is not the harmony of Heaven that makes music in Faust's dying ears, but the sound of the picks and the shovels of nineteenth-century industrialism.

The mid-nineteenth-century work which by its very title most suggests comparison, or rather contrast, with Dante's "Divine Comedy" is Balzac's "Human Comedy." But Balzac did not need to journey to the other world. For him Paris is Hell, the Provinces Purgatory, and there is no Paradise. In his characters, tortured by their present sufferings as Dante's are by their future punishments, we find ourselves.

Between "La Divina Commedia" and "La Comédie Humaine" lies the evolution of the modern world. If much has been lost in divinity, may not something have been gained in humanity?

For Zola the comedy seems no longer even human. It is the inhuman comedy, the bestial comedy, of "La Bête Humaine." In the heaven of the fixed stars Dante discourses on the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity. Zola sees their wretched counterparts in "Les Trois Villes": in "Lourdes," faith founded on fraud; in "Rome," hope based on despair; in "Paris," charity grounded in hatred. In place of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, "Les Quatre Évangiles" for Zola are "Fécondité," "Travail," "Vérité," and "Justice."

One feels the same changed mood everywhere. From far-off Russia comes the trembling voice of Dostoievski asking: "Is there a God?" Wagner's trilogy, in contrast to Dante's, crashes to its end with a "Götterdämmerung" — a twilight of the gods. Neitzsche's lonely Zarathustra mutters: "Gott ist todt . . . todt sind alle Götter." Must the soul of Ibsen's Peer Gynt go back at death into the ladle of the button-moulder?

The tide of faith, which was at the full with Dante, had begun to retreat six centuries ago, and to-day we only hear "its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar . . . down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world."

Could Dante have understood the grim jests of a Thomas Hardy about the "Vast Imbecility," "the President of the Immortals," who has His sport with life's little ironies, or the merry jests of a Bernard Shaw turning, in the interlude of "Man and Superman," Dante's Heaven and Hell upside down?

What would Dante have thought of that gentle ironist, Anatole France, who has surely intentionally entitled his

grotesque counterpart to Dante's "Divine Comedy" the "Human Tragedy." Here the guide who leads the pious Fra Giovanni and shows him the whirling many-colored scrolls of the Truth, and saves his soul, is none other than the Devil. To Dante himself, Anatole France pays his respects in "L'île des Pingouins." There in his imaginary account of the descent of Marbode into hell, he represents Virgil as complaining of a certain Italian poet who had lyingly pretended that Virgil had guided him through the other world and — worse still — had falsely reported Virgil as abandoning the gods of Rome and acknowledging the supremacy of "le dieu des Juifs"!

A recent impertinent book entitled "Dante and Other Wanting Classics," gives this unexpected *coup-de-grâce* to Dante: "He was hopelessly behind his own time in philosophy and religion." In support of this, the fact that Dante still clung to the dogmas of the learned doctors of his day, Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, is offered as proof by this "modern" author — as if he — and we — did not cling to the dogmas of the learned doctors of our day, Doctor Freud and Doctor Einstein.

Is there nothing then of Dante which survives in the midst of our modernity? You may say that our modern critics destroy only the externals. What matter if a Columbus shake our faith in a transatlantic Purgatory? What matter if a Galileo break up our belief in Dante's interstellar paradise? What matter if some future Jules Verne, explorer of the inside of the earth, disprove our acceptance of Dante's subterranean Hell? Even if the "Divine Comedy" is of no value as a revelation of the other world, it is still of value as an allegory of this world. Even if the existence of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven is shown to be a physical falsehood, you may argue that they still contain a great moral truth: the truth of the soul on fire caught in the hell of its own habitual sin, of the soul undergoing purgation through the practice of the remedial

virtues, of the soul blessed in the paradise of fulfilled desire. Even if a literal Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise are taken from us, you may maintain that our belief in the soul remains unshaken. But does it? As the explorer finds no place in the universe for Hell, Purgatory, or Paradise, so the modern physiologist tells us he finds no place in the body for the soul. Our faith in the existence of a soul apart from the body is challenged just as much as our faith in the existence of another world apart from this world. What then remains?

You may say that Dante's fundamental ethical conception remains — the freedom of the will, the power of choice which is for him the basis of good and evil, of punishment and reward. But strict determinism finds no room for the freedom of the will. Virtues and vices are products, just like sugar and vitriol. As the modern materialist robs us of our soul, the modern determinist robs us of our will.

It seems then as if our modern radical were crying: "I care for nothing. All shall go!"

One thing remains, and that, after all, the most important thing in a poet — the poetry. Yet there are, in these days of modernity, critics who would tell us that nothing is further from our modern free verse than the tightly interwoven "terza rima" of the "Divine Comedy" and nothing more distasteful to modern poetic vogue than the classical similes, the involved mythological and astronomical allusions, the elaborate allegorical personifications of Dante's poetry.

Little by little, then, during these six hundred years since Dante's death, almost all, if not all the things for which he stood have been undermined. To the conservative-minded, regretting sadly the loss of faith and the loss of beauty, such reflections as these may give pause, may give ground for question whether, instead of progress, the period from the Renaissance to the present may not have been one of decline. The radical-minded, on the other hand, might, I suppose, view

this falling off with equanimity if not with positive delight, and focus his attention on what has been gained to more than offset any loss — a realm too vast even to be glanced at here, but one which must some day be fully charted if the challenge of Mr. Wendell's point of view is ever to be adequately answered.

With views so divergent as to the whole trend of the centuries and to the whole problem of the past and the future, how can the extreme conservative and the extreme radical ever hope to understand each other? Yet just here is the strange paradox. Sometimes these two minorities — at the right and the left, if you wish — are better understood by each other than either is understood by the majority who stand between. Many, for example, have expressed surprise that such a man as Barrett Wendell, who has been called "the last of the Tories," should have cared to preserve friendships with those who were called radicals. And many have wondered that they in turn should have had so much respect for a man who is said to have thanked God that he had never uttered a liberal sentiment. It is perhaps for this very reason. There was no pretence. They agreed to disagree, and respected each other's honest convictions. Extremes meet, and these two defeated minorities were united by their common differences from the democratic protestations of a muddled middle that would reject them both.

At the end of John Galsworthy's play called "Strife," across the successful group of compromisers between them, Roberts, the unflinching leader of the workers, turns with something akin to sympathy toward Mr. Anthony, the unflinching reactionary, and cries: "For the love o' God, I reckoned on ye. . . . So — they've done us both down, Mr. Anthony!"

Across an intervening world of indifference, there was a strange bond that united some of the younger radicals with Mr. Wendell.

At the end of Mr. Wendell's life he wrote to a former student: "After all, the difference between a reactionary and a radical, at heart, is only that one longs to retain whatever is good and the other to destroy whatever is evil." Of course, the progressive might phrase this the other way about, and looking constructively at the future and not at the past, have said that the conservative, if not "one who never believes in doing anything for the first time," is one who fears changes that may prove evil, while the radical is one who longs for changes that he is confident will prove good. This, too, Mr. Wendell might have accepted; for he wrote me, just before his death, "May the world grow better! You will agree to that phrase, however diverse our honest glosses."

The aristocratic ideal of *noblesse oblige*, of living up to the best of what has survived as fittest through the ordeal of time, is not necessarily incompatible with that fierce fire of rebellion which burns with longing for a better world. A few rare men like Dante have combined both points of view: have wished to conserve what was noblest in the older civilizations and yet have been aglow with the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. The "many too many" seem to be moved by neither passion. To this majority in power, Mr. Wendell's minority of honest conservatives on the one hand, and the minority of honest radicals on the other, can at least join in flinging this double challenge: "What fine traditions of the past are you living up to? What fair vision of the future are you striving for?"

Such are some of the thoughts that have come to me, thinking over these six centuries since Dante's death, as I sit here in elegiac, "ubi sunt . . ." mood in this "Wendell Room" of the Athenæum, overlooking the old cemetery in Boston.

## THE CRUX OF DANTE'S COMEDY



## THE CRUX OF DANTE'S COMEDY

By JEFFERSON B. FLETCHER

"Go on, my friend, and fear nothing; you carry Cæsar and his fortunes in your boat." — PLUTARCH.

### I

THE crux of Dante's *Comedy* is the "hard riddle"<sup>1</sup> in which Beatrice announces to Dante a Deliverer. By this instrument of providence, as I conceive, also Dante himself will be vindicated and brought back to felicity in a happier Florence. His life-story will be thus a double comedy, of fortunate outcome here on earth as well as hereafter in heaven. As "rhetoric" prescribed, his title implies the crucial issue — *Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Florentine by nation not by character*.<sup>2</sup> That moral breach, if naught else, must bar him from his native place.<sup>3</sup> The Florentines, not he, must change. He has changed already — from likeness to them back to that onetime self in which every right disposition gave of itself proof marvellous.<sup>4</sup> "*Eadem mutata resurgo*," he might say.<sup>5</sup> His spiritual crisis is safely past. His soul looks to felicity.

Far different is his human plight. Who might work the miracle of changing the Florentine heart? Not he in his present helplessness. "Wolves" are not moved by fair words; nor would he stoop to move them so. Nay, the Florentines were worse than wolves. Satan himself had entered into that "ingrate folk malignant," and made their city his stronghold.<sup>6</sup> To reduce it, to humble them, called for one stronger than Satan. "Master" Horace had warned that no "god," no *deus ex machina*, should enter into a comedy unless the

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio*, xxxiii, 34 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.*, xxx, 109-117.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.*, x, 188-190.

<sup>5</sup> *Paradiso*, xiv, 125; xv, 28-30.

<sup>3</sup> *Inferno*, xv, 55-78.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, 124 ff.

knot were worthy of the deliverer.<sup>1</sup> Assuredly, Dante's "knot" was such.

Darkly Beatrice promised the divine intervention. But "facts," she had also said, would solve her hard riddle. Facts indeed were showing a mighty champion of justice at work in Italy. The young Lord of Verona, Can Grande della Scala, had already brought the Roman peace of justice to town after town of Lombardy. Vicar Imperial of Christ's Vicar Imperial, the late Henry VII, Beatrice might truly call him "sent by God."<sup>2</sup> Who then might cancel Can Grande's warrant? "Another Moses,"<sup>3</sup> Henry had been cut off in sight of the promised land; but he had committed his sacred mission to one younger and more favored of fortune. Italy, "garden of the Empire," had shown herself indisposed to welcome her rightful lord, Henry.<sup>4</sup> So be it: Henry's Vicar and Captain, the Lord Can, should force her as Joshua had forced Canaan. Especially, he should humble arrogant Florence, sower of the seed of disaffection,<sup>4</sup> as Joshua had humbled Jericho.

Although in a right comedy the distressed hero needs a god's intervention, yet he too must do his part. Dante's part in the exorcising of the devil-possessed city will be as theirs who compassed Jericho, blowing upon their trumpets of rams' horns<sup>5</sup> so that its wall fell down flat.<sup>6</sup> His poem, his trumpet, the savior-poet will be welcomed by the loyal few — those of the house of Rahab — who shall be spared.<sup>7</sup> He and they will be acceptable, each to the other — one in nation and in character. Safe with that "fairest daughter of noble Rome," he — redeemed son of Adam in Eden regained — may prepare for his call to the celestial Rome of Beatrice.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus Inciderit.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.*, v, 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Joshua*, vi, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.*, xxx, 137, 138.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.*, xxv, 1-12. *Josh.*, vi, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, 127-132.

<sup>8</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 100-102.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, xxv, 7.

## II

So Dante's title unfolds into a comedy. Its end, he said, is "to remove those living *in this life* from a state of misery, and to bring them into a state of felicity."<sup>1</sup> But this end, he also said, is "multiple, near and remote." The near end, he explains,<sup>2</sup> is peace on earth for men of good-will. To that earthly paradise a just emperor should lead them. The remote end is peace in heaven for them that love God. To this heavenly paradise a God-loving Pope should lead them. No thanks indeed to present recreant Pope, Dante's feet have been set in the right way to the remote end, the heavenly paradise. Almost miraculously his God-loving lady Beatrice has given guidance. Of eternal felicity his hope is sure,<sup>3</sup> and in despite of evil men. But while these prevail, neither for him nor for any other is there peace on earth. His good is with the common good bound in. To establish that common good — a commonwealth of justice — calls not for crook but for sword. Assurance that Christ's avenging sword is even now in the hand of a proved champion is the inspiring motive of Dante's *Comedy*, is what makes it *his* comedy.

Current interpretations of the *Comedy*, while naturally not ignoring these temporal interests of Dante, yet regard them as something incidental and secondary. The primary motive of the poem is said to be religious — with an amatory coloring. Thus the best among present-day critics of Dante sums up his judgment: "In substance it [the poem] is a spiritual autobiography, a record of the soul's awakening and successful quest of God, like the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. In purpose it is a monument to the idealized Beatrice, fulfilling the author's early promise to say of her what never had been said of woman."<sup>4</sup> I recognize the partial and concurrent truth — and the poetry — of this verdict. Beatrice is still,

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.*, x, par. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *De Monarchia*, III, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.*, xxv, 52-54.

<sup>4</sup> C. H. Grandgent, *Dante* (Boston, 1916), p. 351.

in the *Comedy*, the saving “power behind the throne” of God; but the *throne* her influence enlists for Dante’s *present* need is that of Cæsar. In many things indeed the *Comedy* is like the *Confessions*; but Dante’s shifting of the crucial issue from the next world to this, from the religious to the political plane, makes a radical difference. Augustine wrote as a converted sinner to convert sinners. Like all zealous evangelists, he stresses — morbidly at times — his past wickedness. If such as he could be saved, none need despair. Through two thirds of his book he pictures himself for thirty years still “sticking in the same mire, greedy of enjoying things present, which passed away and wasted my soul.”<sup>1</sup> Briefly, indeed, Dante confesses the same sin.<sup>2</sup> But he so humbles himself before God — or God’s representative — only to exalt himself before men. Sages and saints of the past, demons of hell and angels of heaven attest his singular preëminence. He speaks not as a sinner to sinners, offering meek example, but as one having authority, not to be imitated but obeyed.

Augustine’s story is a *spiritual* comedy. Beginning in the misery of sin, by intervention of a “god” — the true God — he is ending in the felicity of virtue. God’s agent, *his* Beatrice, is Monica. His spiritual “knot” was cut at that moment when he saw himself for what he had become. “Thou, O Lord, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had placed me, unwilling to observe myself; and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, bespotted and ulcerous. And I beheld and stood aghast; and whither to flee from myself I found not. . . . Thou again didst set me over against myself, and thrustest me before mine eyes, that I might find out mine iniquity, and hate it.”<sup>3</sup> So finding out himself, he *refound* himself — the true self he had so nearly lost.

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, vi, xviii (Pusey’s transl.).

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xxxi, 34, 35:

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions*, viii, xvi.

Midway in life, Dante also found out himself, and stood aghast, and knew not whither to flee from the beastlike vices that compassed him about. But with this experience his *Comedy begins*. It is the beginning of the happy ending of Augustine's. Conviction of sin is bitter, but salutary. "I was healthfully distracted," writes Augustine, "and dying, to live; knowing what evil thing I was, and not knowing what good thing I was shortly to become."<sup>2</sup> Dante too, finding out himself, *refound himself*. "Mi ritrovai," he says.<sup>3</sup>

But by definition a right comedy cannot so *begin* prosperously.<sup>3</sup> There is no "knot" to cut. A "god" may be needed to sustain and strengthen Dante, but his spiritual peril is already past.

Dante cited the precedent of Augustine's *Confessions* not alone or first, but after Boethius's *Consolations*.<sup>4</sup> The order is not casual. Boethius sought vindication from men's injustice; Augustine, mitigation of God's justice. Boethius serenely asserted his merit; Augustine miserably confessed his guilt. Boethius demanded justice; Augustine craved mercy. Dante has done both. But as he begins his *Comedy*, he has already won divine mercy, but not human justice. Against the outrageous wrong men have done — and do — him, he will, like Boethius, protest his right. Modesty must give way. Then, too, to exact justice from one's fellow men is for their good also; since to render justice they must themselves be made just!

Dante's hope, however, differs from Boethius's no less than from Augustine's. At best, Boethius might look for only posthumous vindication, rehabilitation by posterity. To his death, I think, Dante confidently expected vindication and rehabilitation in this life.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, VIII, xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.*, i, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.*, x, par. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Convita*, i, ii.

## III

It was in April, 1300, that Dante, dreaming, came to himself in the dark jungle, and found escape cut off by three wild beasts. His first need was to get away from that perilous place. And the spirit of Virgil got him away.

This is literal fact, not allegorical fiction. Through his writings Virgil called to Dante across the ages, and saved him from the false position in which he stood. In his fourth *Eclogue*, as was believed, Virgil unwittingly prophesied the Messiah; in his *Aeneid*, the imperial destiny of Rome. He converted Christian Dante to Roman imperialism as he had converted Roman Statius to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> And a Roman imperialist could not remain where Dante was — in rebel Florence.

Virgil's message had weight with Dante for the same reason that it had with Statius. Virgil's predictions came true. Statius recognized the Child of the *Eclogue* in the Babe of Bethlehem; Dante recognized the Empire of the *Aeneid* in the authority to which Christ submitted himself.

Fear of the pagans about him, however, kept Statius long a "secret Christian." And for the lukewarmness he paid penance in Purgatory through over four hundred years of aimless unrest.<sup>2</sup> Then, to expiate a sin of prodigality, through over five hundred more he had lain face downward in the dust.<sup>3</sup> He wins freedom to rise only now, at the moment when Dante passes, following Virgil.

Statius's careful figures challenge attention. Whatever the scale in Purgatory, one thousand years, or nearly, seem a stiff sentence for the sins imputed — apparently on Dante's sole authority — to the Roman poet. Early Christians had to choose between dissimulation and martyrdom — and if martyrdom were not recognized as extraordinary heroism

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.*, xxii, 64 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii, 88-93; xviii, 88 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi, 67-69.

above and beyond the call of duty, it would not have been rewarded by a special "crown." And unthrift is not a heinous vice. Again, the nearly one thousand years still leave over two hundred unaccounted for, since Statius died before one hundred A.D. Such things are not accidental with Dante. The punishment, excessive for the real Statius, may not be so for the symbolic Statius of the allegory. If the almost one thousand years do not count back to Statius's death, they do to a date of capital importance in human history. Early in the fourth century, according to the legend, the Roman Emperor Constantine, made like Statius Christian, proved himself also unfaithful and prodigal. Ceding to Pope Sylvester his dominions in the West, he gave away what was not his to give, not the spiritual Father's right to receive. The sin was expiated by world-ruin.<sup>1</sup> For "over four hundred years"—until Charlemagne restored Rome's dominion—Christians strayed leaderless in *aimless unrest*. Five hundred years more they have been left face downward in the dust of "present things" by the Church, herself fallen in the mire under her double load.<sup>2</sup> Her one "sun" has eclipsed the other.<sup>3</sup> She is left in darkness, a blind leader of the blind—and the wildest part (*parte più selvaggia*) of the wildwood (*selva selvaggia*) Christendom has become. Statius, then, is representative and type of the Christian so misguided, and suffering for the sins of his "fathers" temporal and spiritual.<sup>4</sup>

Dante has been another Statius. But the Mother of Mercies, Mary,<sup>5</sup> had sent Beatrice to fill for him the place of the recreant Church. Still like Statius, weak of faith, he had denied her to serve the Siren of things present.<sup>6</sup> He had prodigally wasted his heritage from nature and from God, and

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xx, 60; *Inf.*, xix, 115-117; *et al.*   <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-105.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xvi, 127-130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-114.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.*, ii, 94 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.*, xxx, 124-126; *xxxi*, 34-36, 45.

himself become a "wildwood," a *selva selvaggia*,<sup>1</sup> instead of a fruitful garden.<sup>2</sup> And the price of his sin had been "ten years thirst" of his blessedness, Beatrice.<sup>3</sup> His punishment is proportionable to Statius's, if the latter be taken as symbol of mankind's punishment for Constantine's fault. Ten years are a seventh of a man's allotted seventy; one thousand, a seventh of mankind's allotted seven thousand.<sup>4</sup>

But now Dante has repented, and refound himself. Beatrice descends into the Car of *holy Church*, departed from earth, to confess and absolve him.<sup>5</sup> His spiritual "thirst" is promised appeasement. But like Statius, "after God"—in Beatrice—he needs Virgil's ministrations to make him a complete Christian,<sup>6</sup> obedient to *both* Christ's commandments.<sup>7</sup> He must serve not only God but neighbor. The light Virgil cast behind him shows the way. Dante must not for fear, like Statius, hide his light. He must not be a "secret Christian" in temporal faith any more than in spiritual. He must publicly acknowledge the Holy Roman Empire as fully as the Holy Roman Church.

Charity begins at home. His fellow countrymen hold his Virgil in scorn.<sup>8</sup> Dante they heed not.<sup>9</sup> Into their city, which is a dark jungle, a "wildwood" (*selva selvaggia*),<sup>10</sup> no light can penetrate. In it, *parted* against itself, a "*città partita*,"<sup>11</sup> darkest and wildest *part* is that *backwoods party*, *parte selvaggia*, in which Dante finds himself, and which shall presently

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.*, i, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xxx, 109-120.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. St. Isidore, *De fide Cathol.*, ii, xv, 6 (Migne, *Patrol.*, lxxxiii, 523): "In opere enim sex dierum sex millium annorum opera demonstratur. Mille enim apud Deum uni diei comparantur (*Psalm* lxxxix, 4)." An extra "day" of grace—or one thousand years—was supposed to be granted mankind through Christ, so fulfilling in New Dispensation Joshua's miracle of repeating a day in the Old. Cf. Rabanus the Maurus, *Comment. in lib. Jos.* ii, iii (Migne, cviii, 1045); St. Augustine, *De mirabilibus sacr. Script.*, ii, iv (Migne, xxxv, 2175, 2176). The second Saturday gained by Dante represents the notion. *Inf.*, xxxiv, 104, 105.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.*, xxix-xxx.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii, 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii, 106-108.

<sup>8</sup> *Inf.*, x, 63. Guido is type of the most enlightened among Florentine Guelphs.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 73.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 61.

dominate. "Within three suns," however, he with it shall be cast out,<sup>1</sup> and by the contrivance of the Impostor of Rome, Boniface VIII.<sup>2</sup> Against Dante, the false Pope's grudge was special and personal. Boniface had forced "Mother" Rome to play "stepmother" to Cæsar.<sup>3</sup> Dante had publicly protested. In hatred and fear, therefore, Boniface forced Florence to play "stepmother" to her loyal son.<sup>4</sup> For, unlike Statius, Dante had not kept secret his Christian *political* faith.<sup>5</sup> Choosing not dissimulation, but martyrdom, he was meriting his "crown"<sup>6</sup> — like Boethius who dared denounce this world's ill governance,<sup>7</sup> like the forbear who followed his Cæsar "against the iniquity of that Law whose folk usurp, *by fault of the Shepherd, justice.*"<sup>8</sup>

The experience of those last "three suns," or solar years, in Florence — after he had *refound* himself — is the allegory of the *Hell*, first act of his *Comedy*. "Within three suns" — of Friday and the double Saturday<sup>9</sup> — he gains "experience" of Satan's City, true counterpart of Florence.<sup>10</sup> Virgil's shade shields him from its guilt<sup>11</sup> as Virgil's teaching had saved him from the apostasy of Guelph Florence. Virgil used Satan, the arch-enemy, as "ladder" of escape. "Virgil" — professed by Dante — made Boniface, Satan's Vicar and Dante's arch-enemy, get Dante out of Florence. It is the biter bit! Dante's exile proved the ironic justice, the chastening mercy, of God. Dante could not remain a *wild woodman*, a *silvano selvaggio*, and yet be a right *citizen*.<sup>12</sup> But the *woodcraft* meanwhile learned will enable him later — a right "forester"<sup>13</sup> — to clear the "wildwood" itself. That "good" at least he finds in the evil place.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.*, vi, 64 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, x, 124–129.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Par.*, xvii, 49–51.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xv, 139–148.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi, 58–60.

<sup>8</sup> *Inf.*, xxxiv, 104, 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii, 46–48.

<sup>9</sup> *Par.*, ix, 127–132. Cf. *Inf.*, viii–ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv, 8–10.

<sup>10</sup> *Inf.*, xxviii, 46–50.

<sup>11</sup> *Par.*, viii, 115–117. Cf. St. Isidore, *Etymol.*, ix, iv, 2 (Oxford, 1911): "Cives vocati, quod in unum coeuntes vivant, ut vita communis et ornariet fiat et tutior."

<sup>12</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 100.

<sup>13</sup> *Inf.*, i, 8.

Now plainly Virgil's guidance of Dante is not, as currently asserted, guidance of Reason. For Dante the "master and guide of human reason" was Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> and to him as such Virgil frankly defers.<sup>2</sup> But human reason unaided by revelation led even Aristotle — not to say Virgil, Plato and many others — to damnation.<sup>3</sup> Only when Christianized did Aristotle's reasoning become "Catholic opinion."<sup>4</sup>

By Christ alone are men saved. He is the one way to earthly and heavenly felicity. But he is two in one, human and divine, distinct but not separate — like the two-natured Griffin of the *Comedy*. The Griffin's head and body would not function cut apart. Cæsar with Peter, justice with charity, reason with revelation, must work together. Reason without revelation leads to the Limbo of lost hope.<sup>5</sup> Revelation, unless brought down to the sense-bound language of reason, is meaningless for man.<sup>6</sup>

Dante, like Statius, had faith in the Virgil who in his *Eclologue* foretold the Messiah that should bring justice to earth, and in his *Aeneid* assigned to Rome administration of the Messiah's justice.<sup>7</sup> Virgil's reason had so little share in this prophecy that he himself neither understood it, nor profited by it.<sup>8</sup> He was "God's mouthpiece."<sup>9</sup> Statius recognized that Virgil's words were "consonant" with the "new preachers";<sup>10</sup> Dante that they were so with Christ's own, sanctioning Rome's supremacy.<sup>11</sup>

Dante's allegorical action carries the same argument. Courteously, Dante lays to his own unworthiness his hesitancy to follow Virgil.<sup>12</sup> Yet he might well have misdoubted this strange proposer of a stranger plan. To elude wild beasts

<sup>1</sup> *Conv.*, iv, vi, 71, 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Inf.*, ii, 10-27.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.*, xi, 79, 80, 101-105.

<sup>8</sup> *Purg.*, xxii, 67-69.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, iii, 34, 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Conv.*, iv, iv, 115, 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.*, iv, vi, 150.

<sup>10</sup> *Purg.*, xxii, 76-81.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.*, iv, 42; iii, 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Mon.*, II, xii-xiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.*, iv, 40-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Inf.*, ii, 31-36.

on earth by descending among fiends in hell was like jumping from frying-pan into fire! And might not this pagan be tool of the "false and lying gods" he had confessedly lived under?<sup>1</sup> By an equally courteous gesture, Virgil reproves Dante's doubt — of Dante. His calmly reassuring words, however, also attest his own credentials. Not of his devising is the way of rescue. In fact, his writings are as a "lantern" carried behind him in the darkness and so showing only to those who follow the light of justice Roman and Christian alike.<sup>2</sup>

So Dante is convinced. Not by Reason, but by Revelation of Christ through Virgil, he is led to take up his cross of martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> At bottom, the crux of Dante's double comedy, temporal and spiritual, is *Crux Christi*, Christ's Cross. To him, as to Constantine, the sign is given — *Hoc signo vinces*.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV

The *Hell*, first act of Dante's personal comedy, ends with miraculous rescue from damning environment — from that *wild part*, or *party*, lair of wild beasts, set over the infernal city, Florence. The just man is freed from service of sin. But he is now alone, a *party by himself*,<sup>5</sup> in a better sense, therefore, still a "parte selvaggia," a "sylvan" and no citizen as he should be.<sup>6</sup> The second act of his comedy, the *Purgatory*, symbolizes the recovery of his citizenship.

Cast adrift even from his fellow exiles, proscribed, poor, homeless, Dante is at the very nadir of his fortunes. Now, if ever, the knot of disastrous circumstance is to be cut, the *deus ex machina* should appear. And so, having reached this crisis in his kinsman's destiny, Cacciaguida, with dramatic suddenness, announces the providential succor:

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.*, i, 70-73.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xxii, 67-69; i, 43-45. Rome's justice is "parcere subiectis et debellare superbos" (*Aen.*, vi, 853). Cf. *James*, iv, 6; also, *Ps.* xviii, 27, 28 — where the same justice is conceived as illumining the Psalmist's "lantern" (*lucerna*).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Par.*, xiv, 88-108.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii, 61-69.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, xiv, 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 100. Cf. note 6, p. 71.

For thee first refuge and first hostelry  
Shall be his courtesy, the great Lombard's,  
Who on the ladder bears the sacred bird.<sup>1</sup>

The "first refuge" gives promise of the final haven. For *there* shall appear Can Grande, youth of destiny so glorious that discretion forbids full disclosure.<sup>2</sup> Men would not believe — besides, we may infer, enemies would be forewarned.

Yet the veil of caution is thin.<sup>3</sup> We can read between the lines reported. The younger and truly "great Lombard," Can Grande, will later be for Dante securer port and refuge:

Look thou to him and to his benefits;  
By him shall be transmuted many folk,  
Exchanging their conditions rich and poor.<sup>4</sup>

So Rome's justice, as Anchises foretold and Dante cited,<sup>5</sup> shall "uplift the humble and abase the proud." Rome's courtesy was "port and refuge of kings, peoples and nations."<sup>6</sup> Rome's emblem, the "pubblico segno,"<sup>7</sup> is the Eagle. As if by preëstablished harmony, Can's escutcheon shows him the *della Scala*, "of the Ladder," bearing the "sacred bird." He is declared free from the greed and sloth<sup>8</sup> presently disqualifying Emperor and imperialist, or Ghibelline, party.<sup>9</sup> His deeds shall be "magnificences,"<sup>10</sup> gifts proportioned to the need great or small.<sup>11</sup> To only three others the poet of the *Comedy* attributes this virtue — Christ and his Mother, and Beatrice, Dante's spiritual mother.<sup>12</sup> To mankind's need Christ gave himself; Mary, her Son. For Dante's need Beatrice, imitating Christ, left her footprints in hell. There her

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 70-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Purg.*, viii, 19-21.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 87-90.

<sup>5</sup> *Mon.*, ii, vii, 71-73. Cf. above, note 2, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, v, 60, 61. *Refugio*, Italian form of *refugium*, occurs only this once in Dante's writings.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.*, vi, 100.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii, 82-84.

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.*, vi, 97-105; vii, 91, 96; *Par.*, vi, 97-105. Note correspondence of canto and verse.

<sup>10</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 85.

<sup>11</sup> *Cono.*, iv, xvii, 41-43.

<sup>12</sup> *Par.*, vii, 97-120; xxxiii, 20; xxxi, 79-90. For Beatrice's maternal character see *Purg.*, xxx, 79-81; *Par.*, i, 100-102; xxii, 1-6.

love moved Virgil to lead him from "slavery to freedom," and Virgil led him — to the "magnificence" of Can Grande. And Can's years, like Beatrice's, when first met, will be *nine*, auspicious number.<sup>1</sup>

Virgil, I repeat, led Dante to *temporal* freedom. Aristotle and Plato, not to say a host of Christian writers, gave as good or better *moral* guidance. Moreover, the Christian needs no other spiritual text than holy Scripture.<sup>2</sup> In Virgil's inspired word Dante read, not only the need, and therefore right of Roman supremacy, but also a foreshadowing of "the man and the arms" destined to meet Rome's own present need. The wonder-working Child of the Fourth *Eclogue* becomes in Anchises' later prophecy young Marcellus, fosterling of Augustus. "Behold him," exclaims the seer,<sup>3</sup> "glorious in his splendid spoils, and towering triumphant over all. The Roman realm, when upheaved in utter confusion, he, a knight, shall support; he shall strike down Carthaginian and insurgent Gaul, and a third time hang up the captured arms to father Quirinus."

But — *Dis aliter visum!* Young Marcellus must die, his triumph all incomplete.<sup>4</sup> So Virgil's story seems to Virgil a "tragedy."<sup>5</sup> But his fallible reason misread his true inspiration.<sup>6</sup> His Anchises presently also says that, if Fate's harsh decree might be reversed, a "new Marcellus" should arise. "Fate" is but God's providence.<sup>7</sup> By the miracle of the Cross, Fate has been, and again may be, reversed.<sup>8</sup> There can a "new Marcellus arise," to whom the first would be but a "shadowy preface."<sup>9</sup> And now, as "father Anchises" to

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 79–81. Cf. *Vita Nuova*, i, 9–15; xxx.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, v, 76–78.

<sup>3</sup> *Aen.* vi, 855–859 (transl. Loeb Classical Library).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 882 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.*, xx, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theol.* II–II, clxxxi, 6, ad 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Inf.*, vii, 67 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Par.*, xxii, 94–96.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, xxx, 78.

Æneas, forefather Cacciaguida names him to Dante.<sup>1</sup> Only, Cacciaguida speaks of his own true knowledge.<sup>2</sup> He too points to the "confusion" of the "Roman realm"—shown in Rome's "daughter," Florence, so foul that was so fair. *Ex pede Herculem.* But, he concludes, look thou for deliverance to Can Grande. Must not Dante—and Dante's reader—infer in Can a "new Marcellus," who shall "strike down Carthaginian and insurgent Gaul"? "Carthaginian," Dante himself calls the Papacy, covetous of Rome's earthly dominion,<sup>3</sup> "harlot" and "thief,"<sup>4</sup> against whom a new "Scipio"—Marcellus reincarnate—shall be sent.<sup>5</sup> "Insurgent Gaul" is still the pride-swollen rebel "giant" of France, envious of Cæsar and therefore hating his defender Dante, and bending the pliant and captive Papacy to foul ends.<sup>6</sup>

In their message — one in substance — which all command Dante to transmit, Cacciaguida, patriot of Florence, thinks first of his desecrated home, Peter, founder of the Church, of his polluted "seat,"<sup>7</sup> Beatrice, spirit of charity, of the thwarting of divine Love's "magnificent plan."<sup>8</sup> She evokes first a vision of the sad story.<sup>9</sup>

From Jerusalem where he suffered, Christ, the two-natured Griffin, has drawn the Car of his Church westward to Rome, where is planted the Tree of Justice. And he binds the Car by its pole, his Cross, to the Tree, so to await secure his second coming. The pagan Eagle of the Tree strikes it in vain. The sly Fox of False Doctrine is speedily cast out. But then, foolish in new friendliness, the Eagle moults into the Car his golden plumes. Grateful Constantine makes the fatal gift to

<sup>1</sup> Dante himself points out the parallel, and uses Virgil's own language and words. *Par.*, xv, 25–30; *Æn.*, vi, 835.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, xv, 55–63; xvii, 13–18.

<sup>6</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 151–160; xxxiii, 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.*, viii, 165–172.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.*, xxvii, 19–26.

<sup>4</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 149; xxxiii, 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vii, 113.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.*, xxvii, 61.

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 100–160.

Sylvester. The Car is weighted down to earth. The Dragon can reach it from below, and tear off part of its bottom. The great schism of the Eastern Church happens. When Constantine carried off to the East his branch of the Tree, with it he carried a fragment of the Car. And the riven Tree in the West withered; and the broken Car was changed by the Circean poison of the golden plumes into a two-natured monster, half-bird, half-beast — a mockery of the holy Griffin. Upon it, instead of the Holy Spirit, — represented by Beatrice, — a loose Harlot sits, beguiling and beguiled. No longer the rotted Tree holds the Car secure. Out of the Tree's decay has sprung a Giant, lustful and brutal, who, when his Harlot casts a single glance towards Dante, drags her off out of sight. "Insurgent Gaul," strong in the Empire's decay, has dragged off the Church from Rome to Avignon. A moment Pope Clement had looked to Dante appealing for her right protector, Henry VII, who might have succored Clement as Charlemagne had succored Adrian.<sup>2</sup> But the "Gascon," another Judas, betrayed his Saviour that might have been.<sup>3</sup>

It is the crisis of disaster for Christendom. As in Dante's own case, the "knot" is worthy of a "god." As for Dante, Cacciaguida, so now Beatrice for Christendom — and Dante — announces him.<sup>3</sup> The Church, Car of salvation, broken by the serpent, no longer *whole*, — "Catholic," — is no longer *holy*. And within its body still, poisonous, are those plumes of temporal power. They are the "sop" graciously given, but "evilly received."<sup>4</sup> Yet "God's vengeance fears not the sop" — even though after it Satan enter into the betrayer. God will send one stronger than Satan to force the Church to disgorge, and to render again unto to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The Eagle's "heir" shall be again full-feathered,

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, vi, 94-96. Cf. *Epist.*, v, 126-130.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 82.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, xxxiii, 31 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *John*, xiii, 26, 27 — as currently interpreted. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Comment.* in *Joan.*, *ad loc.*

and the Church regain her natural form. I read in the stars, concludes Beatrice, that even now the Deliverer is at hand. And he shall be a "Five hundred, ten, and five."

The "facts," she adds considerately, will clear up her dark riddle. She might, it seems, have spared Dante — and Dante's reader — the superfluous enigma of the number. Without its dark enlightenment, all the *facts*, as we have seen, pointed unmistakably to Can Grande as the man of destiny. Visibly, year by year, triumph by triumph, he was fulfilling her prophecy — and Virgil's and Cacciaguida's and Peter's. By his abundant fruits Dante might know him.

But Dante would get and give assurance doubly sure. Back of Beatrice's cabalistic number is another of more immediately divine formulation. This is the number of the Beast — and of the Man — set down in *Revelations*. St. John, "Christ's Eagle,"<sup>1</sup> strong-sighted through love, looked deepest into the Sun of truth. To him the dying Saviour confided his own Mother.<sup>2</sup> She dying, her motherhood of man passed to the Church. So John became guardian of that vicarious Mother, and in vision was given warning of her peril, and — like Dante later — was commanded to publish it. Her membership, "family of the Lamb," shall be warred upon by the "family of the Dragon."<sup>3</sup> Through the "Mother" left exposed on earth, Antichrist will strike at Christ. At the last and direst peril, when she seems lost, the Lamb himself shall descend and, slaying the Beast, lead his fellow lambs into the heavenly fold.

Thus John's narrative is, like Dante's, a comedy in which the distressed hero is in the nick of time rescued by a descending god. Also Dante, a "lamb" of the Lamb, is warred upon by the "wolves" of Florence, whelps of the Beast, the "old She-Wolf." But the "sacred poem," *his "revelations,"* may

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xxvi, 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv, 112-114.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aquinas, *Expos. I. in Apoc.*, xiii.

be means of overcoming their cruelty, and of winning him return to the "dear fold" with "another voice, another fleece," — those of the Lamb *militant*, — to receive a victor's crown.<sup>1</sup> Beatrice's prophecy reveals how his personal and earthly triumph may be brought about.

Object of John's solicitude is the holy Mother, spiritual "centre" of Christ's Church.<sup>2</sup> Object of Dante's solicitude is Beatrice, his own Mother in Christ, and *centre* of the Church descending to him in his vision.<sup>3</sup> Her Car has become an ambiguous Beast; her seat usurped by a Harlot. So John saw the Whore of Babylon on a seven-headed Beast.

"Historically" interpreted, the Beast's seven heads are the seven hills of degenerate Rome.<sup>4</sup>

In John's allegory there are two Beasts, one from sea and one from land — one, that is, from princely pride and one from priestly avarice.<sup>5</sup> The second Beast with dragon-voice urges submission to the first, proclaiming that all who "buy and sell" *Christ* must show the mark — the number or name — of the first Beast.<sup>6</sup> And this mark is counterfeit of the mark of the Lamb. For the craft of Antichrist is to feign himself Christ, to hunt — like the *wolf* of the fable — in sheep's clothing. "As Christ is called king, pontiff, and prophet, so Antichrist shall pretend to be now king, now pontiff, now prophet."<sup>7</sup> His number is therefore Christ's number — 666.

By the cipher of Greek numerals, — since *John* wrote in

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xxv, 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Albertus Magnus, *De laudibus b. Mariae*, etc., ii, ii, 17: "Ipsa dicitur umbilicus Ecclesiae: quia sicut umbilicus in medio totius corporis, sic ipsa in medio Ecclesiae."

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, xxix-XXX.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *Comment. ad loc.* Cf. the "parti elette" of *Par.*, ix, 140; also *Inf.*, xix, 106-111, where "on the waters" is *on the Tiber*.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, *op. cit.*, xiii, *prin.* The Veltro feeds not on "land or self." *Inf.*, i, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *op. cit.*, xiii, *fin.* Cf. *Par.*, xvii, 51.

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *loc. cit.*

*Greek*,<sup>1</sup> — this number spells “Teytan,” or Titan, which interpreted is “sun” or “giant.” By usurpation, the Beast will proclaim himself accordingly “sun of justice and giant of double nature, divine and human.” Likewise, by Latin numerals, — pertinent because of the inspired Vulgate version, — DCLXVI spells “DIC-LVX,” or “Say-Light,” that is, *soi-disant* Light of the World.

Dante adapts this symbolism. The Pope of Rome has indeed a vicarious right to call himself “Light of the World” in things spiritual. But that spiritual light he has darkened by claiming to be “Titan,” “giant of double nature,” and so “sun of justice” *temporal* as well. By “theft” of its proper power he has darkened the second “sun of Rome,” justice of the Emperor, also.<sup>2</sup> Betraying the true, the “pacific Titan,”<sup>3</sup> set beside him for his earthly protection, he has fallen into the abusive clutches of a pretended “giant,” in reality only big with pride.

Beatrice’s promised Deliverer is to restore the dispossessed true Titan, to let the eclipsed sun of temporal justice shine again. He is not the “two-natured giant,” Christ himself, nor yet vicar of both natures, but of authority solely human and temporal. His number is therefore lesser — to wit, “515,” 6, unit of John’s number, expresses God’s perfection; since as the factors of 6 are 3, 2, and 1, so there are 3 Persons, 2 natures in Christ, 1 essence of God.<sup>4</sup> Unit of the Deliverer’s number is 5 — 100, 2, and 1 times 5. His perfection, whose number it is, will be of Justice executive and commutative. For he will be another Cacciaguida, going “against the iniquity of that law whose folk, by fault of the shepherd, usurp justice.”<sup>5</sup> He will be another Joshua, Maccabæus,<sup>6</sup> Scipio, Marcellus.<sup>7</sup> The natal influence shaping his nature as theirs —

<sup>1</sup> Aquinas stresses this point.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.*, xv, 142–144.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xvi, 106–112.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 37 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.*, v, 10; vii, 19; *Par.*, xvii, 82.

<sup>7</sup> See above, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *loc. cit.*

*as also Can Grande's*<sup>1</sup> — is the stamp of Mars, *fifth* heaven and heaven of the Cross. And the seal of the Cross upon the soul is the mark of the stigmata, the *five* wounds of Christ.<sup>2</sup> In them, declares St. Bonaventure,<sup>3</sup> “glow the superabundance of divine wisdom, power and goodness,” feeding on which the Veltro, sheep-dog of the Lamb, shall so be — in Virgil’s list<sup>4</sup> — *fifth* to save Italy by his “wounds.” The Five Wounds shall serve him as the “five stones” served young David — to slay the giant Goliath.<sup>5</sup> Once Dante had expected Henry VII to be the new David;<sup>6</sup> but the sling had passed from his dying hand to Can’s live one. By Can’s prowess, the Five Wounds shall make and be a “safe asylum,”<sup>7</sup> larger exemplar of the one he was to offer Dante.

Against the law of the “felon folk,”<sup>8</sup> “family of the Beast,” the Deliverer shall array the Law of Jove’s Eagle, defined in “5 times 7 vowels and consonants.”<sup>9</sup> After the first 3 letters, DIL, there is pause, during which Dante appeals for understanding to the “Muse” that maketh to be glorious and long-lived men and cities and kingdoms. Then is spelled out Christ’s Law of Justice: *Diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram*. Thus separately presented, the first three letters — number of the Trinity — serve as superscription to the Law, by recognized cipher initialling *Domini Iesu Lex*. Also, product of the numerals D, I, L — 500 times 1 times 50 — equals that of D, X, V — 500 times 10 times 5 — of the Deliverer’s number. His *product* will be Christ’s Law, the Law of the Roman Eagle.

For this product he must possess the authority implied in the thirty-fifth and last letter of the Law — the M of *terram* — monarchy of earth. In the M, Jove’s sphere appears “silver

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 76–78.

<sup>6</sup> *Epist.*, viii, 176–183.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Par.*, xi, 107.

<sup>7</sup> Bonaventure, xii, 659.

<sup>3</sup> *Opera*, Paris, 1871, xiii, 193.

<sup>8</sup> *Par.*, xv, 145.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.*, i, 106–108.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 88, 89. .

<sup>5</sup> Bonaventure, xiii, 20, 55, 68.

distinct from gold" — the power of the universal Monarchy is temporal, distinct from the spiritual Papacy. To reach its perfection, its entelechy, the M develops from national monarchy to international, from "Lily" to "Eagle."<sup>1</sup> *Five* nations have striven towards this self-fulfilment — Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Macedonian, Roman. The *fifth*, or Roman, alone succeeded.<sup>2</sup>

The Veltro feeds on "wisdom and love and virtue." The *virtue* is fortitude, heritage from the imperial *fifth* race and gift of the *fifth* heaven. The *wisdom* is of the Law temporal inscribed on Moses' two tablets, the *twice five* Commandments.<sup>3</sup> The *love* is the "ardor of sacrifice"<sup>4</sup> of the Cross expressed in the 5 Wounds multiplied a hundredfold by divine Charity, since "Charity is signified by 100."<sup>5</sup>

This "500, 10, and 5" shall slay the "Thief" and the "Giant," the recreant Papacy and her pride-swollen paramour, or Monarch of the Lily, usurpers of the power of Rome, counterfeiters of the "Number of the Man." But false Rome has a false daughter, Florence, city of the "five thieves."<sup>6</sup> herself a giant *fivefold* swollen in pride.<sup>7</sup> She is another Pentapolis, City of *Five*, once in obedience to the Law of the *Five* Books, the *Pentateuch*, an earthly paradise, but now sunk to a Dead Sea, unstable and fetid, of Pride.<sup>8</sup> Her *wisdom* is blindness;<sup>9</sup> her *love* malignity;<sup>10</sup> her *power* the "accursed flower" of Circe, her *florin*, feeding on which the shepherd turns wolf,<sup>11</sup> and her Lily, which severed from the Eagle, its natural "head," is shamed and bloody.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xviii, 97–114.

<sup>2</sup> *Mon.*, ii, ix.

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas so explains the factor 10 of the second numeral 60 of the number of the Beast.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.*, xiv, 93.

<sup>5</sup> *Mon.*, ii, ix.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *loc. cit.*: "Charitas, quae significatur per centenarium."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.*, xxvi, 1–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Par.*, ix, 127 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.*, xvi, 46–48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi, 151–154.

<sup>8</sup> Aquinas, *loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> *Inf.*, xv, 67.

Spoken only in the tongue of the "Latins," Beatrice's number should carry only the cipher of Latin characters. By anagram, these, DXV, reveal the Deliverer as a *DVX*. In Roman usage, Dux is a military commander. The title would fit the new "Scipio" predicted by St. Peter, but not — naturally — an *Imperator*, or Emperor.<sup>1</sup> The "infallible"<sup>2</sup> Lady should not falsify facts, or contradict the "apostolic light" of her Church! But there is absolutely no basis for the common identification of her champion with the "heir of the Eagle," a coming right emperor. On the contrary, she says plainly that *some time in the future* there will be an "heir," but that her champion is *now at hand*. This champion, sheriff-like, may, however, forcibly seize the stolen property, and hold it in trust for the "heir" to come. "The facts," she says, will solve her "hard riddle" of the champion's identity. The facts showed Dante no prospect, in any near future, of a right emperor. After "exalted Harry's" death, the two squabbling pretenders — "German" Frederick and Louis — were worse than even "German Albert." He at least could, if he would, have made himself a true Cæsar and a peace-maker for Italy.<sup>3</sup> Frederick and Louis were — during Dante's lifetime — impotent even against each other. They brought not peace but war. The imperial "saddle" was empty, and likely to remain so indefinitely, though Justinian had "patched the bridle."<sup>4</sup> He however, true *Imperator et Dux*, had pointed the way out. Called to higher things himself, he made Belisarius, with whom manifestly was heaven's right hand,<sup>5</sup> vicarious Dux. Also — and more literally — called to higher things, confident in Can Grande's "star," Henry had named him Vicar Imperial — *Dux "pro imperio sacrosancto Romano."*<sup>6</sup>

By currently used cipher, the champion's number implies

<sup>1</sup> A Cæsar's full title was "Imperator et Dux."

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, vii, 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, vi, 76-117.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-90.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.*, vi, 22-27. Note the correspondence in canto-number.

<sup>6</sup> *Aqua et terra*, xxiv, 3, 4; *Epist.*, x, superscript.

Can Grande's name. *Can Grande* was understood to mean "Great Khan," Tartar title equivalent to the Roman *Dux*.<sup>1</sup> In mediaeval Latin, again, the characters *X* (for *Ch*, Greek *X*), *C* and *K* are interchangeable.<sup>2</sup> *D*, *X*, *V*, therefore, do actually initial Dante's own title for Can — *Dominus Kanis Victoriosissimus*.<sup>3</sup>

Commentators have long recognized the obvious pun on *Can Grande*, "Great Dog," in Virgil's *Veltro*. It is not to smile. Puns are serious things for Dante and his age. *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*.<sup>4</sup> A preëstablished harmony was recognized in names.<sup>5</sup> But there is also correspondence between the *Veltro* and Beatrice's *Dux*. The *Veltro* is to chase back to hell the greedy *Lupa*. The *Dux* is to send to hell the greedy *Puttana*, or Harlot. A *puttana* is a *lupa*.<sup>6</sup>

When the "She-Wolf" couples, mankind *troubles*.<sup>7</sup> That her double Beast — monstrous commixion of spiritual and temporal power — "may not be taken away from her,"<sup>8</sup> the Papacy whores with princes of the earth, cajoling these to rebel against the Emperor, their lord and her prey. Other "sons of earth," the Giants, once rebelled against their lord, high Jove. But with his children — the "Thymbræan," Pallas and Mars — he overthrew them.<sup>9</sup>

On this legend Dante bases complicated symbolic analogies, of which my space permits only barest hints. It was Thymbræan Apollo who bade Æneas return to the land of his

<sup>1</sup> Even two centuries later, Paolo Giovio still so explains, suggesting that some crusading ancestor of Can's may have assumed it in token of triumph. *Elog. viror. bellica virt. illust.* (ed. Basil, 1596), i, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Du Cange, *Gloss.*, s. n. *K*.

<sup>3</sup> *Epist.*, x, superscript.

<sup>4</sup> V. N., xiii, 20, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, *S. T.*, iii, xxxvii, 2. Cf. *Par.*, xi, 52–54; xii, 67–70.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Isidore, *Etymol.* (ed. Oxford, 1911), xviii, xlvi, 2: "Lupae meretrices sunt a rapacitate vocatae, quod ad se rapiant miseros et adprehendant." Cf. *lupanar*.

<sup>7</sup> The punning connection between *ammobglia* of *Inf.*, i, 100 and *ammdlia* of *Par.*, xxx, 139 is patent.

<sup>8</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 151.

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.*, xii, 31–33.

ancestors, the "soil that sent him forth."<sup>1</sup> Apollo likewise inspires Dante, and to like enterprise.<sup>2</sup> Since Apollo has "entered into" him, Dante himself enacts the "Thymbræan." Pallas — the Roman Minerva and the Holy Roman Virgin Mary — has set her "leaves" of wisdom on Beatrice's head.<sup>3</sup> Her rôle, therefore, Beatrice enacts. Can Grande, another Romulus and son of Mars.<sup>4</sup> enacts in service of the Cross the deity of his paternal heaven. United, these three — Dante, Beatrice, Can Grande, or Love, Wisdom, Power — shall overthrow the "Giants," and redeem the soil that sent Dante forth.<sup>5</sup>

This is Dante's personal and nearer goal. Also, he conceived the humbling of Florence to be Can's next strategic objective. The Florentine "flower" — both *florin* and *Lily* — was potent against the Roman peace. Florentine money power corrupted, and also gave the "sinews of war"; her standard of the Lily was raised against the Empire. Moreover, she was next neighbor to Lombardy, nearly pacified already by Can. Tuscany humbled would form with Lombardy a state under Can's Eagle such as that Cacciaguida had lived in under the ægis of the just and valiant Countess Matilda. For the loyal remnant it would be an earthly paradise, even though outside there stretched a desert of "thorns and thistles," haunt of beast-like men, Circe's changelings. After all, was not the first Eden so? "If it be asked," wrote Aquinas, "why God made not all earth man's paradise, it may be replied that a large part of earth had to be set aside for the

<sup>1</sup> *An.*, iii, 85 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, i, 19–21; xxv, 1–12.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, xxx, 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.*, xvii, 76–78. Cf. *Par.*, viii, 131.

<sup>5</sup> Variant of this symbolism appears in *Par.*, ii, 7–9. The two "Bears," guides of the mariner on life's sea, I conceive to be Pope and Emperor. The Great Bear (or Wain, or Car of the Church) is lost behind a cloud of sin. Also, the present Papacy — typified by Nicholas (*Inf.*, xix, 67–123) — is "son of the Bear" of Cupidity. Hence, whereas the true Great Bear, Helice, is mother to the Lesser Bear, Arcas (*Par.*, xxxi, 31–33), the Papacy is murderous "step-mother" to Cæsar. Both Bears are so lost to mankind; but, aided as before, Dante shall rediscover them.

other animals to abide in with their kind. For man, however, as noblest part and end of creation, the noblest part of earth was reserved.”<sup>1</sup> North Italy, at least, now a “desert,”<sup>2</sup> might become again a “garden” under the Tree of Justice.

Such a garden it had been under Matilda’s rule. She too had defended her realm against a “giant,” defying Henry IV as Cato Julius Cæsar. For Cato, the imperial office that Cæsar founded and first filled was sacred. For assaulting it, Brutus and Cassius writhe in the mouths of Satan.<sup>3</sup> The man Julius, however, was no Eagle, but a predatory “hawk.”<sup>4</sup> The right Cæsar should rule as a freeman over freemen.<sup>5</sup> Julius was a slave to appetite, to feed which he made his subjects slaves.<sup>6</sup> By like distinction, Dante condemned and resisted Boniface VIII, even while rebuking the impiety of Anagni.<sup>7</sup> And one and the same principle justified his siding *against* Pope Boniface and Matilda’s siding *with* Pope Gregory. To Peter, no less than to Cæsar, must be rendered the things that are *his*. Boniface had usurped Cæsar’s prerogatives; Henry IV, Peter’s. Against just protest, Henry had insisted on appointing Church officials. Also, he was not reverent but insolent to the holy Father.<sup>8</sup> It should be remembered that Dante was no hard-shell Ghibelline, but a *party by himself*.

Cato’s spirit pervades and rules the purgatorial Mount,<sup>9</sup> rejecting the unfit,<sup>10</sup> spurring on the laggard.<sup>11</sup> So in life he had urged the remnant of Pompey’s army across the Libyan desert.<sup>12</sup> And it is his freedom-thirsting spirit that spurs Dante to follow Virgil, the imperial ideal, up the mount of chastening torment, the sandy desert outside the garden of

<sup>1</sup> *Expos. in Genesim*, ii, me<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Purg.*, xx, 85–96.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, vi, 103–105.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Mon.*, iii, xvi, 134–140.

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.*, xxxiv, 55–67.

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.*, i, 65, 66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, 123.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Mon.*, i, xi.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 118 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, v, 132–170.

<sup>12</sup> *Inf.*, xiv, 113–115.

his desire.<sup>1</sup> His own freedom the living Cato could not win. His desire was noble, but his eyes were without light. No more than Virgil may he enter into the earthly paradise.<sup>2</sup> Himself entering therein, Dante sees at first the spirit of Matilda alone. By degrees she leads him, however, to Beatrice descended again into the Car of the Church remade whole and holy.

The allegory is clear. Dante is readmitted into the garden of his delight, which is none other than the dark jungle he had fled, but now lifted up from the valley of the shadow of sin to the sun-lit heights of rectitude. The tangle of malignant growths is pruned away. The ordered and fruitful trees make a green shade where birds sing. Virgil is justified. Justice has returned, and the first *humane* time. The age renews itself<sup>3</sup> — of Cacciaguida's Florence "at peace within her ancient close, sober and chaste," under her Countess Matilda.<sup>4</sup> Matilda's springtime spirit, this long while captive, like Proserpine,<sup>5</sup> in this other realm of Pluto, the "accursed wolf," has resurrection — in the Scaliger, bearer of the Ladder under the Eagle.

Consider the interweaving of the multiple symbolism. Can Grande, bearer of "exalted Harry's" commission, justiciary of the Eagle, shall have made Florence fit for the abode of just men. By his friendly "ladder" (*Scala*),<sup>6</sup> Dante will climb back to the city, exalted because humbled, as from it, debased to hell, he had climbed by the enemy "ladder" of the fallen Eagle, Lucifer. Now safe under the Eagle as unfallen Adam under the sacred Tree, he may train himself to climb the spiritual "ladder" from earth to heaven,<sup>7</sup> from Cæsar's eagle-nest to the nest of the "Eagle of Christ" — and not

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.*, i, 71.

<sup>2</sup> By imputed faith he shall, it seems, be admitted into the heavenly paradise — and Virgil also, if Beatrice's grateful intercession avail. *Inf.*, ii, 73, 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Purg.*, xxii, 70-73.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.*, xv, 97 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Purg.*, xxviii, 49-51.

<sup>6</sup> *Epist.*, x, par. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Par.*, xxi, 25 ff.

only to Christ's "best beloved," but to his own also. For Beatrice is the "Eagle" that first plumed him for flight with her own plumage of love,<sup>1</sup> and trained his eagle-eyes to look upon the "Sun of the angels."<sup>2</sup> She it is, as Adam tells Dante, who has "disposed" him to the long ladder to be climbed.<sup>3</sup> And Dante, as he climbs, reads the signs of his destiny writ large upon the heavens themselves. First, against the Sun, light-giver that "guideth aright everyone in every way,"<sup>4</sup> glows the triple Circle of Prudence, weighing things past, present and future. True prudence may counsel seeming imprudence. Within the Circle forms the Cross of Mars. "Arise again, and conquer!" its spirits urge Dante.<sup>5</sup> His house was founded on the rock of Cacciaguida's martyrdom. He shall take his own stand thereon. To him, then, "Jove's Bird" takes gradual shape, issuing from the sacred Law.<sup>6</sup> Its right he must maintain against the "felon folk" who, scorning it, martyred his kinsman — aye, and his kinsman's home and his. And in gratitude, borne by his prince Can Grande, that Eagle will shed its plumes on Florence, to make for him therein a nest of peace. Another Ladder then will be let down from heaven — that which Jacob also saw in dream reaching up to God's own throne,<sup>7</sup> the triune Circle of the Godhead.<sup>8</sup> And up that final Ladder another Eagle will draw him — Christ's own "Eagle," Love.<sup>9</sup>

Thus by Ladder and Eagle man is drawn from Circle to Circle. The first Circle bears Christ's Cross; the second his

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xv, 52-54; *Inf.*, ii, 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 46-54; xxi, 1-12; xxii, 124-126; xxiii, 46-48; xxvi, 1-12; xxxiii, 49-57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi, 109-111. Cf. *Par.*, x, 82-87. Adam appears fitly after Dante's successful examination in the three holy virtues, for these shall bring him to Adam's double paradise, earthly and heavenly.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.*, i, 17-18.

<sup>5</sup> *Par.*, xiv, 121-126.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii, 70 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi, 25-30; xxii, 61-72.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 115 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii, 100-102; xxxi, 65, 66, 94-102.

Countenance.<sup>1</sup> By the Ladder of his Cross man climbs to his presence. That dolorous effort is the *merit* in which man is sustained by his *grace* through the vicarious double Eagle, Emperor and Pope.

Dante's hope, therefore, requires these two factors of merit and grace, Ladder and Eagle.<sup>2</sup> Because he feels them assured, he may call his autobiographical narrative a *Comedy*. Christ, the divine "Eagle," has sent his "family" of lesser Eagles to sustain him against the "family of the Beast": loving Beatrice to be for him wing-giver and vision-strengthener; Virgil, "Eagle" of poets and prophet — voice of the Eagle of Rome; Can Grande, the *Scaliger*, bearer of the Ladder under the Eagle by which Dante himself shall climb back into his Florence of the Lily made perfect under the headship of the Roman Eagle.

## V

With the exile's symbolic return ends the *Purgatory*, second act of the *Comedy*. In the third act, the *Paradise*, he rises with Beatrice altogether away from earth, even from Matilda's lofty realm. But he goes only to return. The experience he shall have gathered on high — as previously in hell below — is for the good of Florence as well as for his own. By Can Grande's right and might she will have been made again what she was under Matilda — a city of freemen under a free lord. But true freedom is service of justice. The Florentine "remnant," entered again into this freedom, must walk and work in it. They must fit them to climb the Ladder to the final "freedom of eternal glory."<sup>3</sup> Himself, the now full-fledged Eagle, will train them as he has been trained. He will make over his people into likeness to that "people just and sound" of the heavenly city — antithesis of the City of Dis — that

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xiv, 100–102; xxxiii, 130–132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv, 67–69.      <sup>3</sup> *Epist.*, x, 154, 155.

he has seen in his dream.<sup>1</sup> His *Hell* mirrors Florence as she now — as he writes — is; his *Paradise* mirrors what his hope would make her.

The poet in exile can only picture his hope. But if his hope of return were realized; if with “another voice, another fleece,” he should assume at his baptismal font the *cappello*; if Peter’s true *representative* should therewith “encircle his brow,”<sup>2</sup> might he not make his dream reality? Knowing as we do his premature death, we are apt to think of Dante’s career as ended with his great poem. He had no reason to think so.<sup>3</sup> For him, still in vigorous middle life, conscious of his genius, much-experienced in affairs, rehabilitation in a Florence purged of enemies could not mean a leisured retirement. His “friend” Can Grande must still need his aid and counsel. Was it not written that “to rule well and perfectly, philosophical authority must be conjoined with imperial”?<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the still youthful prince must need a mentor.<sup>5</sup> Dante would have been to him another “Romeo”; but from Can’s “magnificence” Romeo’s “ill requital” was no wise to be feared.<sup>6</sup> Nor would the loyalist Florentines, saved through him, enact the envious Provençalese. Had he not served as Rahab, by whose aid Joshua had won Jericho, and whose household therefore Joshua had spared?<sup>7</sup> To the victory he had helped “by one and other palm” — palm of poet and of statesman, Virgil’s twofold pupil, *autore* by both derivations, *author* and *authority*.<sup>8</sup> *Il cappello* — meaning both *chaplet*

<sup>1</sup> *Par.*, xxxi, 37–39.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Inf.*, xxxi, 127–129; *Par.*, xxii, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv, 1–12.

<sup>4</sup> *Conv.*, iv, vi, 157 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, xxiv. Can was born in 1291.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.*, vi, 127–142. The logic of Justinian’s whole discourse is: the Roman Eagle’s progress has been halted; another Romeo is needed to guide onward the sacred bird. Also, Dante is a “romeo” in a figurative sense — a seeker of the true Rome. To that end he had been a “palmer” bearing his *palm* of grace across the *sea of sin* (*Par.*, xxvi, 55–66) — and a “pilgrim,” wandering *perforce far from his native land* to the shrine of hope (*Par.*, xxv, 17, 18, 82–87). *Vita Nuova*, xli, 34–52.

<sup>7</sup> *Joshua*, vi, 17. *Par.*, ix, 115 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Inf.*, i, 85. Cf. *Conv.*, iv, vi, 14–37.

of poet and *cap* of authority — would fitly recognize his double claim. There would be poetic justice, too, in the conferring of the *cap* at his baptismal font, seeing that the amnesty once offered him required him to wear thither a *fool's-cap* written over with his name and shame.<sup>1</sup>

Instrumental in freeing his city from servitude of sin, he will be given authority to train her, so purged, in service of justice. He will be the *silvano*, the forester,<sup>2</sup> of that once Dark Wood, now set in a high place near unto heaven. It will be a pleasant arbor, shaded like Eden from the too burning rays of the sun.<sup>3</sup> Mortality cannot withstand the direct glory of God's face.<sup>4</sup> But Dante has seen a garden fairer still, all of roses and lilies in full sunlight;<sup>5</sup> and at last a single Rose, upon whose petals are enthroned, triumphant, the soldiery of Christ.<sup>6</sup> It is the Rose of Charity, central in the heavenly paradise, as was the Tree of Justice in the earthly. As far as may be, Dante the forester will bring his wooded city nearer to that beatific garden, letting in the sun of divine truth as the vision of his charges strengthens — until naught need be interposed save the veil of mortality itself.

Thus he will have lifted up his people from the depths to the heights. He will have served Matilda and Beatrice, as Jacob served Leah and Rachel. Through *both* he has begotten good works. For this must be a double service, a priestly task besides a political. Peter's seat is empty, as well as Cæsar's throne. Until they are filled again, he must in humility take upon himself their double guidance. Into the earthly paradise he leads both Virgil and Statius.<sup>7</sup> The neighborly task done, Dante, like aged Jacob, aged Marcia,<sup>8</sup> will turn himself

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paget Toynbee, *Dantis Epistolae*, Oxford, 1920, p. 154, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii, 1-3. Cf. Aquinas, *Expos. in Gen.*, ii.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Par.*, xxi, 1-12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii, 70 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx, 124-126; xxxi, 1-3, *et seq.*

<sup>7</sup> *Purg.*, xxviii, 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Conv.*, iv, xxviii, 97-163.

wholly to God in the joy of contemplation long deferred. The Virtues will no longer forbid.<sup>1</sup> And for guide, Beatrice, modestly withdrawn into her heaven, will send him Bernard,<sup>2</sup> in whom, as in Virgil, symbol and reality meet. St. Bernard is no mere personification of *Contemplation*, rapture of the lonely soul to God. His life offers not merely high example of this rapture. In his writings,<sup>3</sup> he actually taught Dante the way of the mystic, as Virgil actually the way of the statesman. Also, there is another real, if remoter, influence. Bernard as monk preached the crusade in which Dante's forbear Caccia-guida bore his Cross, and so bade Dante take up his. Finally, Bernard was Mary's best beloved,<sup>4</sup> Eagle-messenger of the Mother as John of the Son. She, to whom Dante daily prays,<sup>5</sup> is alpha and omega of all his mercies. Her handmaid Beatrice she sent for his justification, from her servant Bernard she receives him, justified, and herself intercedes for his reward. Yet behind and above these "magnificences" is her gift of her Son, whose Cross is the true *crux* of Dante's personal comedy, and of whatso other shall have happy issue here or hereafter.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.*, xxxii, 1-9

<sup>2</sup> *Par.*, xxxi, 94-98.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Epist.*, x, 554, 555

<sup>4</sup> *Par.*, xxxi, 100-102, xxxii, 106-108

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii, 88, 89.

## **CHAUCER AND MEDIAEVAL ROMANCE**



## CHAUCER AND MEDIAEVAL ROMANCE

By HOWARD R. PATCH

CHIVALRY, we are told, received its deathblow from the rise of the merchant class—a theory which seems to rest on the popular notion that industrialism is always to be blamed for a collapse of ideals. Some historians, however, point out that chivalry waned contemporaneously with the Crusades. Still others recall the fact that in warfare the knight became impractical when the unmounted yeoman grew in prestige. Many are the causes that lead to changes of this kind. Whatever may be the truth in this case, it is safe to say that when Chaucer was alive and hale fully one hundred and fifty years had passed since the time when men rescued fair ladies from famished dragons. To Chrétien de Troyes and other minstrels of his period there was doubtless an element of stout realism in the recovery of Guinivere, or in the quest of the Grail.<sup>1</sup> The twelfth century still had the lure of the Holy Land to draw its fervor, and the magic of the Far East to make it believe that nothing is but what is not. Through the numberless romances the knights became familiar figures, and the very quantity of romantic literature tended to reduce the quantity, if not the quality, of romance. Realism becomes difficult with distance, however, and in the fourteenth century it was rather to the imagination which found special glamor in the remote or impossible that these stories offered an appeal. Perhaps this is another instance of an old idealism becoming transmuted into poetry, the religion of chivalry giving place to its mythology.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance* (Göttingen and Baltimore, 1923), I, 120 ff.

Without question there were some excellent stories written under the impulse of the alliterative revival, but these seem to have been mostly translations or revisions of old material. To "olde bokes" one had to go for the original, — "as men may in thise olde gestes rede," — for in Chaucer's day Gawain "with his olde curtesye" has gone forever to fairye, and Lancelot, who knew so well of "subtil loking and dissimulinges" and all the form of courtliness, he, alas! is dead! With the romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the case is somewhat different. Occasionally, it is true, an author strives to give the impression that he has found his source in some ancient manuscript, for what writer in the Middle Ages did not prefer to call up authorities from the vasty deep, if possible? But, often as not, the beginnings are abrupt, with no apology except that the tale is a good one.

Considering the multitude of romances in the earlier period, then, it seems likely that one reason for the number of competent or artistic productions in the late fourteenth century, including the Constance group and *Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*, which show a power that depends on more than a survival of interest, is that they already offered the charm of the antique. The use of alliteration seems to support this idea. In relation to the whole field, therefore, Chaucer is in a position similar to that of Malory and Spenser.

From this point of view it is worth fresh inquiry to discover what is Chaucer's response to the thoroughly romantic appeal of this subject-matter, which any well-read man of his day could hardly escape knowing pretty extensively. The term "romantic" in such a connection deserves an explanation, perhaps, and yet it seems natural and fitting for the word to mean "whatever has to do with romances." In that sense the implications are, for a while at least, clear, and thus it may stand for the course of this discussion. To what extent does the romantic quality (or the quality of the romances) ap-

pear in Chaucer's work? By glancing over the five hundred years of criticism and allusion which Miss Spurgeon has collected for us, one may learn from various angles the nature of Chaucer's realism, and it is essential to continue to enrich our interpretation of this side of his nature. But what is he as a romanticist? Is he so steadily the realist that he never lives in Arcady? By his time the oaks were old in Sherwood forest and probably in Arden too!

As a matter of fact, the critic in a scientific age may become almost depressed in spirit when he observes the quantity of Chaucer's poetry which, in some way or another, seems to belong to the category of romance. This is no realist, whose reading was so one-sided. Even his speech echoes the romantic language. A collection of interesting examples has been made, and here may be found such figures as: "ful lyk a fiers leoun," "as freshe as is the brighte someres day," "freshe as faucon comen out of muwe," "whyt as foom" — figures that the casual reader might think were taken from a fine observation of real life, which a realist's inquiring eye could make. Furthermore, in all his works there are allusions to romantic material. The *Book of the Duchesse* refers to the cycles of Troy, Alexander, and Charlemagne, and includes an entirely unnecessary borrowing from *Octavian Imperator*. The poem called *Against Women Unconstant* brings in Candace and Criseyde. The *House of Fame*, packed with properties from the romantic storehouse, adds Arthurian sources in the allusions to English Geoffrey and to Isolde. The *Parlement of Foules*, *Anelida and Arcite*, and the *Knight's Tale* owe a substantial debt to the Cycle of Thebes. The *Troilus* calls up Troy for the space of a love-affair. The *Legende of Good Women* gives us Trojan material. The *Man of Law's Tale* belongs to the Constance group. The *Monk's Tale* presents the story of Alexander. The *Nun's Priest's Tale* alludes to Lancelot and Ganilon. *Sir Thopas* is a parody of romance. The *Wife of Bath's Tale* gives

us the Loathly Lady, the *Clerk's Tale* belongs to the Griselda cycle and the *Lai le Freine* group, the *Squire's Tale* is of true romance all compact — as far as it goes, the *Merchant's Tale* alludes to the “paradys terrestre,” to Wade’s boat, and to Pluto, King of Fairy, who, the footnotes tell us, comes from *Sir Orpheo*, the *Franklin's Tale* is a lay, and the *Manciple's Tale* might just as well be as not.

Such a summary as this is pardonable in view of the total effect, to recall with some vividness the pertinent fact that subject-matter, which in some way or other is related to romance, is widely used in Chaucer’s works. One might go further and observe that romance-reading in a book was as characteristic of Chaucer’s maturity as of his youth, and that, if frequency of allusion counts for anything, the matter of Troy appears most largely. We might go on to add that, except for an occasional moral lapse into the didactic or pious, Chaucer never quite got away from the spell of the romantic, that the realistic forms of literature, such as the satires or *débats*, do not seem to have caught his interest much, unless you bother with the *fabliaux*, which, being human, he could hardly avoid.

But most of these inferences, and, indeed, much of this material, vanish on closer examination.

He clapte his handes two  
And farewell! al our revel was ago.

In all the works many of the allusions come second-hand from the *Roman de la Rose*. Many of the similes and metaphors which are found in general use in Chaucer and in the romances were probably also current in the ordinary speech of the day (“whyt as foom” depends neither on romantic imagination nor acute powers of observation). Or, in some cases, the stories come from works which are anything but romantic in nature. Thus Chaucer may have taken his material on Alexander partly from Quintus Curtius or from the tale in the

*Gesta Romanorum*; and that on Constance from the Anglo-Norman Chronicle and Gower, that on Griselda from Petrarch's treatise Even references like that to Octovien in the *Book of the Duchesse*, and that to Pluto, King of Fairye, in the *Merchant's Tale*, are of dubious origin Perhaps Octovien is brought in, not by way of romance at all, but as the emperor of the Golden Age, which, the poet thus implies, obtained during the happy reign of Edward the Third It is similarly that Deschamps several times refers to him "Quant verray je le temps Octovien," he asks, "Que toute paix fut au monde affermée?" And, as it happens, Pluto is mentioned neither in *Sir Orpheo* nor in *King Orfeo* as the King of Fairye, but as an ancestor of Orpheo's father Even in the *Troilus*, when the ladies are listening to the "Sege of Thebes" (an episode which is not in the *Filostrato*), what they hear is apparently the "geste" of Statius, and not a romance at all

So one might continue The mention of a "romaunce" in the *Book of the Duchesse* may refer to Ovid, or more likely to the *Dit de la Fontaine Amoureuse* One scholar has suggested that the poet seems to have taken prose romances rather lightly After thoroughly going over the whole ground of Chaucer's "learning," Miss Hammond made an even more extreme statement. "Were it not for the full knowledge of the English metrical romances displayed in the Time of Sir Thopas," she remarks, "we might have assumed that Chaucer had done no reading in that field, and had picked up the allusions to Gawain as courteous, Tristram and Lancelot as typical lovers, and Arthur's court as the centre of chivalry, from the literary commonplace of his time"

But surely exception should be made for the works which borrow most liberally from documents of this kind — namely, in the case of the *Troilus* from *Il Filostrato* and the *Knight's Tale* from *La Teseide*? Long ago, however, with an acumen which has been common property ever since, Professor Ker

observed that "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is the poem in which medieval romance passes out of itself into the form of the modern novel." If he found his plot in a romance, therefore (although I am not sure that the *Filostrato*, if "graceful," is quite so "superficial" as Ker seems to imply), he straightway changed the tone and quality of his story and produced something else. It is a tragedy, is it not? — in which the youthful characters introduce the saving presence of humor!<sup>1</sup> What then of *La Teseide* and Chaucer's transformation of it for the purposes of his knight?<sup>2</sup> This Italian poem, which, according to Ker, is "the first of the solemn row of modern epics," becomes, he thought, "a complete and perfect version of a medieval romance, worked out with all the resources of Chaucer's literary study and reflexion." Here, we may suppose, is his most perfect expression of the romantic spirit.

But when we stop to think of the nature of true romance, as it has endeared itself to readers, and obtained a permanency in literature as a special type, does this observation seem quite satisfactory? In the first place, it is hardly profitable, for critical purposes at least, to classify as romance every sort of literary production in the Middle Ages which will not fit in with the religious, didactic, or dramatic or satiric writings. Nor is the proper criterion to be based on such treatments of subject-matter as the use of adventure or the emphasis on love, for while romance persists in later periods in a duly recognizable form, adventure and love are found useful, not only here but elsewhere, among realists and even allegorists. The characteristic which marks romance and defines its quality is rather the appeal, through the nature or the manipulation of the subject-matter, to the imagination. Remote or mysterious or fanciful the stuff of which it is made may be, or again, the things it presents may not be so very far off or unhappy, nor the battles those of so very long ago, but in either case the

imagination is touched, follows readily, and comprehends, while one's reason is mystified or held in abeyance. The use of creatures only to be seen at twilight, a special absense of explanations, a departure from that air of verisimilitude where the reader is tempted to check up the veracity of the author, these traits are what we delight in when we read the stories of the French Vulgate, or the late and essentially romantic stories of Charlemagne, or such tales as the *Awntyrs of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn*. Not that realism is never used, but that when it is, romance, for the while, is less evident. When the table of food appears without even a wicked steward to account for it, or when Persifal fails to ask the question which will relieve the stricken king — then, call it the mood of wonder, if you like, the artistic satisfaction comes by way of the imagination. This, let it be understood, is no attempt to define the meaning of nineteenth-century romanticism, which introduces enough and differently baffling problems of its own. This refers rather to what is strictly within the fold of mediæval romance, and perhaps it is only another way of indicating what one critic has called the "incredible" nature of the material.

Whatever be the terms used to describe it, the quality itself is clear, I think, and this quality hardly predominates in the *Knight's Tale*. Professor Ker had in mind, obviously, the historical rather than a critical use of the word "romance," and, on that ground, his dictum is valid. Yet in *Epic and Romance*, where the discussion in question occurs, his task is mainly to give a critical meaning to this expression, and so he challenges fresh criticism with the effort.

In revising Boccaccio's story it does not appear that Chaucer made any changes in the general direction of what we have described as romantic. Among other modification he quite deliberately introduced the following important ones. First, the long warfare at the beginning is omitted, and the emphasis

falls at once, on the relationship of the three characters — Palamon, Arcite, and Emelye. Secondly, the element of chance, often so vital to romantic literature, is diminished by the development in some respects of what Professor Ker called the "classical panoply." Thirdly, the irony of the story, based in part on the parallelism of the two lovers, is greatly magnified in importance, and, by the omission of Arcite's long complaint and the substitution for it of his speech, "Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune," the sentimentality of the original is much reduced.

In regard to the second of these points, one cannot fail to observe the humor which is included when Saturn is called upon to settle the controversy between Venus and Mars. It seems, these deities have too promptly answered the prayers addressed to them, without consultation as to the merits of those who have prayed. As to Dame Fortune, although she is constantly blamed in Boccaccio for the action of the tragedy, Chaucer tends to ignore her and adds a passage from Boethius in which Destiny is described as the servant of God. Chaucer speaks of

The destinee, ministre general,  
That executeth in the world overal  
The purveyaunce that God hath seyn biforn (A. 1663-65)

This passage strengthens the plot at the moment of its greatest weakness, the moment when Theseus happens to come upon the two fighters. Instead of ascribing the coincidence to the workings of Fortune, Chaucer explains that it is only one of the strange episodes which Destiny has brought to pass, not through caprice, but as part of the Divine plan. Boccaccio refers elsewhere to "l'alta ministra del mondo Fortuna," and thus in the *Knight's Tale* we find a reminiscence of this line in the *Teseide* and also of Dante's "general ministra e duce" where Fortune herself is represented as God's handmaid. The control of Chaucer's story is, therefore, rational rather than

casual, a point which may explain why the merits of the heroes are more nearly taken into account, and why Palamon rather than Arcite, as in the *Teseide*, is the first to see Emelye (since the plot requires that he be the hero ultimately to win her). This does not obviate the condition that Arcite's fate is still something of a sentimental tragedy, but it is certainly true that the emphasis on this side of the story is lightened. Enjoyment of the characters outweighs paradoxically our concern for them. In the loss of Arcite we are not inconsolable for:

‘Certeinly a man hath most honour  
To dyen in his excellence and flour’ (A 3047-48)

Character is enriched in Chaucer's version even at the expense of the splendor of the tournament and the excitement of combat. Thus there is no intention here of creating a romance of chivalry, if in such literature passages at arms are of chief importance. Nor is the love-affair stressed for its own sake so much as for the humor it reflects upon the heroes. With remarkably simple technique Chaucer's story gives us the irony of youth, the irony of young men in their tremendous concern for a young lady, and the opportunity for dramatic reflections of that kind is what, I think, originally commended the plot to the special interest of the English poet. In this quality the story closely resembles *Troilus and Criseyde*, to which it probably stands closest in time of composition.

Notice that hardly a moment is lost before we come to the two young knights lying “by and by” “bothe in oon armes”—

Of whiche two, Arcita hight that oon,  
And that other knight hight Palamon, (A 1013-14)

which gains in effect if you fall into a slight singsong as you read it. Both of them become pale “as asshen colde” under stress of their experiences within and without the prison wall, and of their retinue in the tournament we are told.

So even withouten variacioun  
Ther nere swiche companyes tweye (A 2588-89)

Their parallelism might be compared, without offence, to that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; and their battle—not to be profane—might evoke memories of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but the very exaggeration involved in the comparison ruins its critical meaning and should not be tolerated—after it is once said. Besides, Chaucer has made the heroes so much alive, and we are so sympathetic with their desperate case, that any observation of their similarity is clumsy. Arcite is the more manly figure, a true knight, Palamon is steadfastly the lover, who is willing to turn state's evidence to win his game “Palamon is much more passionate and jealous,” remarked ten Brink, “much less magnanimous than the corresponding character in Boccaccio, and Arcite also becomes much more positive and violent in [Chaucer's] hands”

In many ways the humor of the poem turns on the characterization. There is nothing in the *Teseide* to match the intense youth of Palamon's speech to Theseus. “Slay me,” he cries, but quickly adds,

‘Or slee him first, for though thou knowe it lyte  
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcyte’ (A 1723–24)

Nor is there anything to match the flavor of the sentimentalism into which Theseus falls in discoursing on his ancient loves:

‘A man mot been a fool, or yong or old,  
I woot it by myself ful yore agoon’  
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.’ (A 1812–14.)

This is a whole world different from “Ma perchè già innamorato fui,” which is pretty cold logic. Take the very speech already cited, in which Arcite bursts forth.

‘Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune  
Of purveyaunce of God and of Fortune.’ (A. 1251–52.)

While he thus complains that he is now out of prison (at a time when Palamon is lamenting that he himself has not been able to get free), Arcite is unaware that this is his first step

in the process of actually obtaining a sight of Emelye. But the points of irony in the *Knight's Tale* have been often listed. It is hardly necessary to recall that one knight wins the tournament but fails to get the lady, while the other loses in the joust but gets her. Nor must I observe here that, although there is pathos in the death of Arcite, genuine as it is, even that receives a new touch in such a passage as,

‘Why woldestow be deed,’ thise wommen crye,  
‘And haddest gold y-nough, and Emelye?’ (A 2835-36)

We do not dwell too long on the funeral or follow his soul through the spheres. Nor must I mention the fact that Chaucer provides us with the “delicious Egeus,” and with the speech of his son, who seems to have something in his blood from “these tedious old fools.” Nor must I add that in his description of the funeral pyre and the funeral, Chaucer uses that quite familiar formula of abbreviators — “I do not need to tell you,” “I need not observe,” “nor do I need to recall” — which serves so often as an underhanded device for setting forth old material, and that he then gives an interminable list of details of supposed solemnity.

But how the fyr was maked up on highte,  
And eek the names how the trees highte,  
As ook, farr, birch, asp, alder, holm, popler,  
Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chasteyn, lind, laurer,  
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasel, ew, whippeltree,  
How they weren feld, shal nat be told for me,  
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun  
Disherited of hir habitacioun,  
In which they wonden in reste and pees,  
Nymphes, Faunes, and Amadrides,  
Ne how the bestes and the briddes alle  
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle,  
Ne how the ground agast was of the light — (A 2919-31)

and so on, for thirty lines and more

One critic has observed the changes that the poet makes for the sake of realism, especially in the feudal elements of the story; and another has pointed out that in the garden scene

we feel a clear impulse from the vernal wood. But obviously that is not all. It is the tone of something rather like levity which is most surprising in this tale. The Knight seems to have cared less for the mysterious and the uncanny than for some other things, and, above all, he has a sense of humor. With a sympathy the more wholesome for this grace, he gives us the tragedy of youth, by means of a characterization which is not over-individualized but sure.

All this bears directly on Professor Ker's definitions. "The success of epic poetry," he said, "depends on the author's power of imagining and representing characters . . . Without dramatic representation of the characters, epic is mere history or romance." "The history of the early heroic literature of the Teutonic tongues, and of the epics of old France, comes to an end in the victory of various romantic schools . . . From within and without, from the resources of native mythology and superstition and from the fascination of Welsh and Arabian stories, there came the temptation to forget the study of character." These passages in their own context in *Epic and Romance* show that character is the main interest of the epic. But, while it would be absurd to argue that the *Knight's Tale* belongs to that type, the changes that Chaucer made in his material are certainly not pointed the other way.

On the other hand, I would not try to maintain that humor and dramatic irony are absent in the romances. We find good dramatic irony in that burly production, *Havelok*, where the hero and Goldborough are loathe to wed because they both think that Havelok's station is too low for such a union. In *King Horn* there is irony where Athulf longs for Horn's arrival — when as a matter of fact he is present all the time. The many recognition scenes in other poems involve in some cases the same implication. If the *Knight's Tale* must be a romance, I would say that it is after the manner of the English.

Cycle Characterization too is not foreign to romance. One thinks of the tradition of Sir Kay and of Gawain, or of such figures as the butcher in *Octavian*. You can go even further, and say that not all of the known romances are purely romantic. But the distinguishing quality of this kind of literature, that expression of the imagination "that possesses"—Ker himself put it thus—"the mystery and the spell of everything remote and unattainable," is not what Chaucer contributed, any more than it is what he found in his source. One may question whether humor creates a healthy atmosphere for such a quality, and whether, if the *Knight's Tale* be classified as romance, such pigeon-holing tells anything about the romantic temper in Chaucer.

Yet no one is likely to say, with Lowell, that in *Sir Thopas* Chaucer gives the *coup de grâce* to chivalry. The *Squire's Tale* is an answer to that. Unfinished as it is, and drawn, not from the traditional cycles but from Oriental material received, probably, at second hand, it shows a conscious effort at a sustained performance in the romantic vein, and it seems to have sprung from the poet's ripest years. Grant that the *Wife of Bath's Tale* is mainly satiric, and the *Franklin's Tale* domestic, and you still have a residue of isolated passages which show the same spirit.

Indeed it is possible to make out a good case for the theory that the *House of Fame* was written for the appeal of romantic adventure. This is not to say that no allegorical intention was implied, or that personal allusions were totally absent (or were to be in the finished product). But the wealth of material, borrowed for this poem from romantic sources, or related to interests of that kind, leads one to suspect that Chaucer meant to go beyond the machinery of the Court of Love; at least one can be sure that he was not content with that alone. In the Alexander Cycle, only to cite one group of parallels, we find the same desolate wastes and extraordinary

mountains, as well as the flight up into the skies which Chaucer knew and mentions. The alliterative *Wars*, which tells of Alexander's flight with the griffons, also describes a "wilsom waste and wild and wondirly cold," and a valley "where flakes of snow fall from heaven" and "sparks of fire fall like rain," recalling distinctly the desert scene in the *Inferno*, which Chaucer himself remembered. With such descriptions at hand one may ask why Chaucer failed to write an actual romance. Perhaps he was more concerned with his search for tidings. Perhaps, as in the case of the Knight, his humor was far too mischievous when he told this story.

The fact remains that there seem to have been odd moments when he, too, held Lancelot de Lake in full great reverence, or had, at least, a glimpse of things romantic of which the spell still lingers here and there in his poetry. Any creature of the land-beyond-the-mist would testify to the "authentic note" sounded in such a description as that of the scene:

Under a forest, syde —  
 Wher — as he saugh upon a daunce go  
 Of ladyes foure and twenty and yet mo,  
 Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,  
 In hope that som wisdom sholde he lerne  
 But certeynly, er he came fully there,  
 Vanisshed was this daunce, he niste where (D 990-96)

One reason that definitions of romance have been so difficult to agree upon is that a prime essential of the romantic is its elusiveness. Is it pedantic to hint that this is what marks the hovering quality in such passages in Chaucer's verse? At any rate it is no disparagement to claim that Chaucer, like many another, opened magic casements in his day, and that his realism was none the worse for it.

## THE QUESTION OF MEDIÆVALISM



## THE QUESTION OF MEDIAEVALISM

By T. LAWRENCE RIGGS

INTEREST in the Middle Ages has steadily grown since its naïf stirrings in the eighteenth century. It was for some time not distinguished by accurate research or genuine comprehension. Indeed it cared little for these things, being chiefly in search for relief from neo-classic stiltedness. The architectural inadequacy of Strawberry Hill as a mediæval manor house would not have disturbed Horace Walpole, had Pugin been there to point it out, nor were the entranced readers of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic romances bothered by questions of historical accuracy. Scott's portrayal of the Middle Ages, though he did not seek meticulous exactness, was, like those of Goethe and Victor Hugo, far truer than the earlier efforts. Yet the mediævalism of the Romantic School, accurate or not, looked on its favorite period primarily as a pageant. Beauty and adventure and mystery were the objects of its quest. It revelled in dim cathedral twilights and tournaments of plumed knights. Of the fundamentals of mediæval thought it was entirely ignorant.

After the first Romantic enthusiasm for the *mise-en-scène*, mediævalism continues to gain in popularity while becoming highly educated. The literature, history, art, and architecture of the Middle Ages are exhaustively rediscovered. Texts are edited and courses dealing with the period multiply in the universities. Dante takes his unquestioned place with Homer and Shakespeare, the cathedrals have ample vengeance on an age that dubbed them "Gothic." Mediæval sources are ransacked for literary inspiration and there is frequent imitation of their manner. Architectural principles are assimilated

with results that are often more than merely imitative. Victorian mediævalists were, in short, much more scholarly than their Romantic predecessors, but enthusiasm, where such existed, was still in general confined to æsthetic spheres. In the Catholic Church, a revival of the best traditions of mediæval thought, the neo-scholastic movement, was beginning. But even among philosophic specialists, only a few took the trouble to do more than talk about outworn props to dogma. Mediæval ideas and ideals, as distinct from mediæval history, art, and literature, remained a virtually closed book to the non-Catholic world of culture, with the exception of such figures as Ruskin and Morris, whose mingled moral and æsthetic fervor led them into realms of industrial theorizing along more or less genuinely mediæval lines.

No very startling change in the intellectual world's attitude towards the thought of the Middle Ages has taken place in the past few decades. Economic descendants of the pioneers just mentioned, basing their programmes on the guilds, form a not inconspicuous group of social reformers. A few neo-scholastics, notably De Wulf of Louvain, have gained a wider hearing, and more popular mediævalists, brilliant if intemperate, Belloc, Chesterton, and Cram, are read with interest by many. Yet a systematic grasp of mediæval principles is still rare, and the overworked cliché about angels dancing on the point of a pin still passes for a summary of scholasticism in many a college course.

There is unconscious approach to the Middle Ages, nevertheless, in various fields of modern thought. Driesch and the neo-vitalists in biology, however different their terminology, are expressing views akin to those of the scholastics. The same may be said of William McDougall's soul-theory as developed on purely empirical grounds in his *Body and Mind*. Moreover, the dogma of nineteenth-century chemistry concerning the absolute separateness of the elements has been modified since

the discovery of radium, and the alchemists' aim seems to have been without inherent impossibility after all. By unconscious approach in several fields, therefore, as well as by the conscious discipleship of limited groups, the thinking world shows its readiness for an increasingly general assimilation of mediæval ideas.

What fundamental characteristics of these ideas are likely to constitute their widest appeal to our times? The supernatural theology which the Middle Ages accepted (the crown, and not, as many imagine, the basis of their thought) will be left out of the present discussion. Be it noted, also, that if certain mediæval concepts are of permanent value, the question how successfully they were put into practice is largely irrelevant. The "spotted actuality" of which Henry Osborn Taylor treats in his *Mediaeval Mind* may have been very spotted at best, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were certainly periods of intellectual and social decline. But such historical considerations cannot condemn the ideals striving for fulfilment in the best mediæval period, if these ideals were in themselves sound. Nor, on the other hand, if we accept the most roseately Chestertonian picture of mediæval conditions, can we further the ideals of the period by advocating an impossibly wholesale return to those conditions.<sup>1</sup> Nationalism and machinery have come to stay, or at least cannot be destroyed without destroying Western civilization. The question is whether there are certain mediæval concepts whose value is unimpaired by the passage of time and which can be profitably applied to a world that has in many ways permanently changed.

Let us look for suggestions at a sentence from the greatest

<sup>1</sup> "It is positively distressing to see historians, under the spell of special sympathies, proclaim the thirteenth century the best of all centuries of human history, and prefer its institutions to our own. Such *laudatores temporis acti* really injure the cause which they intend to serve." De Wulf *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*, p. 6.

thinker of the Middle Ages "Human nature," says Thomas Aquinas,<sup>1</sup> "is subject in the first place to the order of its own reason; secondly to the order of human government, spiritual or temporal, political or domestic, thirdly to the general order of divine government" The scheme of presentation is characteristic A threefold order is emphasized, individual, social, cosmic. What were the essentials of the mediæval attitude toward man as a psychological unit, as a member of society, as an element in the universe?

In the first place, as to their conception of the human individual, the Middle Ages distinguished between material and non-material or spiritual elements Adopting and developing the Aristotelian psychology, they insisted that thought and volition could not be mere products of sensation. They recognized, on the other hand, the completely intimate welding of spirit and matter in man, and the dependence of thought on sensation for its necessary data "Nothing is in the intellect which has not first been in the senses," was an axiom. Thus they rejected the innate ideas of Plato and the theory of a soul accidentally attached to the body Modern experimental psychology, which has no difficulty in destroying the Platonic and Cartesian souls, has made no discoveries that are not entirely congenial to the true scholastic doctrine, and welcomed by its modern exponents. To sum up, this doctrine means a perception of *unity in variety* reached by a method of *analysis followed by synthesis* By analysis, it avoids the lop-sidedness of materialism or of an exaggerated spiritualism, by synthesis, it avoids that failure to recognize the essential unity of the ego which has made psychological parallelism such an unsatisfactory halfway house.

In the social sphere, the mediæval approach is by a similar method. Social life is necessary for man. If a man be too base to share it, he is less than man, *quasi bestia*; if he does not need

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologiae, Prima Secunda, qu. 87, art. 1*

it, he is more, *quasi quidem Deus!*<sup>1</sup> Yet he does not exist for the sake of society, but society for him. He has inalienable rights, "to preserve his life, to marry and to bring up children, to develop his intelligence, to be instructed, to hold to the truth, to live in Society."<sup>2</sup> And society must help him "not merely to live, but to live well."<sup>3</sup> In return, he owes allegiance to governmental authority, which comes from God as the Author of nature. This authority is transmitted by the people to their ruler, who should be carefully chosen and can be deposed if he becomes tyrannical. Aquinas prefers a mixed system of elective monarchy, but adds that circumstances must decide the best form of government.<sup>4</sup> As to property, the individual has the right to acquire and dispense it, but its use should be for the common good. "Temporal goods," says St. Thomas, "should belong, as to use, not only to their owner but also to others."<sup>5</sup> Of course social unity is not, in the mediæval conception, as close as the "substantial unity" of the individual. Men do not coalesce to form *one thing*, one "substance." There is nevertheless a real synthesis, involving rights and duties, and here as in the psychological sphere, what the French call *solutions simplistes* are avoided. The absolute state, monarchical or otherwise, is rejected on the one hand, and unbridled individualism on the other.

Finally, when they considered Man in his relations to the Universe, the scholastics arrived, by several lines of *a posteriori* reasoning, at God, the First Cause, the necessary and perfect Being, distinct from the Universe of creatures. Everything

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *De Regimine Principum*, *Liber I*, cap. 1

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theol.* Ia, IIae, qu. 94, art. 2

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Commentary on the Ethics of Aristotle*, lect. I, cap. 1

<sup>4</sup> For an admirable treatment of the whole subject, to which these remarks are much indebted, see Chap. XV of De Wulf's *Mediaeval Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, 1922.

<sup>5</sup> *Summa Theol.*, IIa, IIae, qu. 32, art. 5, and elsewhere. The principle is well illustrated by a series of papal laws, allowing all who wished to cultivate privately owned and idle lands on the Roman Campagna. See Garriguet, *Le Régime de la Propriété*, pp. 258 ff.

predicated of God is either negative or to be understood in an analogous sense. This is above all true of God's *Being*. He is in a sense infinitely fuller than that in which creatures are. They owe to Him their origin and their preservation. Yet their existence, though dependent and finite, is not illusory but real. Man, moreover, being a rational creature, can come into conscious relationship with God, even in the natural sphere. He can know something of God by his reason, indirectly and inadequately but none the less truly. And by that same reason he can learn much of the moral law whose author is the Author of nature. It should again be noted that the supernatural theology which presented a much more elaborate scheme of Man's relations with God, need not here concern us. It presupposed a natural theology, a philosophic conception of the Universe of the sort described, avoiding the Scylla of Monism and the Charybdis of a Gnostic God,<sup>1</sup> remote, inaccessible and unknowable.

Of the thought of the Middle Ages as a whole, Jacques Maritain, a leader of French neo-scholasticism, has written as follows:<sup>2</sup> "Truth cannot indeed be found in a philosophy which occupies a middle ground between contrary errors by mediocrity and by falling below them, that is to say, by being made up of borrowings from both of them, by balancing one against the other, and by mingling them in an unenlightened selection — eclecticism; but truth must be found in a philosophy which occupies a middle ground between contrary errors by superiority and by dominating them, so that they appear to be fragments detached from its unity. For evidently this philosophy, if true, must see clearly what error sees only in a partial and biased way, and must also judge and preserve, by its own principles and its own light, whatever truth error includes without being able to discern it."

<sup>1</sup> Recently revived by Mr. H. G. Wells as the "Veiled Being," and furnished with a finite demiurge!

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction générale à la philosophie*, p. 194.

The author of this passage ingeniously illustrates his point by habitually printing a summary of the various scholastic theses in the middle of the page, flanked on either side by the views of those who carried to extremes one or the other aspect of the problem in question. This paper has tried to suggest similar comparisons in regard to certain very broad conceptions of mediæval thought.

Reflection will show that these conceptions, these syntheses following analyses, concerning Man, Society, the Universe, far from being merely abstract, can be made of great practical value. Our educational methods, for instance, are sorely in need of a psychology which recognizes the reality of both spirit and matter in man, and their mutual interaction, which refuses to treat humans as brutes, as machines, or as discarnate spirits, but which deals with their composite yet unified nature as it is. Our politics need to avoid the idea of the Absolute State. We are not menaced by the divine right of kings, that Renaissance doctrine wrongly supposed to be characteristic of the Middle Ages, but we are most obviously menaced by the Rousseauistic idea of a majority creating right and wrong, and having unlimited power over the individual and the family. Nor is mere individualism a solution of the problem any more than, in the economic realm, the *laissez-faire* principles of the nineteenth century are an answer to Socialism. Finally, in the sphere of natural religion, Man needs an object of worship that the various forms of Monism fail to provide. To tell us that Matter and Energy are God is to make the Universe darker than that of the crudest polytheist, to tell us that we are all part of God may flatter our pride for a while, but must leave us mentally unconvinced and spiritually desolate at last. Nor can Theism do much more unless it emphasizes God's immanence as well as His transcendence, unless it finds Him in nature and allows human reason a glimpse of Him. And those who accept the claims of a revelation ought to

realize that supernatural religion can never dispense with natural, that Christianity must wane if philosophic Theism on a rational basis be ignored.

In psychology, in the social sciences, in natural religion and ethics the world has much to learn from the Middle Ages. The study of their principles should be free alike from "inverted Utopianism" and from anti-mediæval prejudice. In the neo-scholastic movement these principles are being exhaustively studied and reapplied in the light of modern discoveries. "If anything was investigated by the scholastic doctors with too great subtlety," wrote Leo XIII in 1879, "or handed down with insufficient consideration, or is incompatible with the proven teachings of a later age, it is by no means our purpose to propose such things to our age for imitation." If men of other training keep insisting that neo-scholasticism's only object has been "to make intelligible to reason the dogmas that faith already accepted," that there is small danger of the movement "suspecting that there might be things in heaven and earth undreamt of in its philosophy,"<sup>2</sup> and so forth, they will be depriving themselves of much that might be useful to the world at large. But an open-minded investigation of mediæval principles, in their applicability to modern conditions, by scientists, educators, statesmen, and philosophers, might well result in important gains to civilization.

<sup>2</sup> Lord St. Cyres's grotesque paragraph on the Neo-Scholastic movement in the article *Roman Catholic Church* in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is worthy to rank with the diarist Evelyn's remarks on Gothic architecture "A certain licentious and fantastical manner of building congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use, or beauty."

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE — RATIONALIST



## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE — RATIONALIST

By H. W. HERRINGTON

IN a study, undertaken a few years ago by the present writer, of magic, witchcraft, and related themes in the Elizabethan drama,<sup>1</sup> a striking phenomenon observed was the broadly varying attitude toward the occult in all its phases on the part of the several dramatists of the period. Analysis of the works of these promised to be particularly rewarding in the case of Christopher Marlowe because of his reputation as a radical in religion and an intellectual rationalist. The present investigation was undertaken, primarily, to see if any light could be thrown on Marlowe's state of mind by an examination of the manner in which he employs the supernatural in his works, and, secondarily, to determine if evidence could be found in this study for or against his alleged authorship of some dozen plays, not in the accepted canon, which have on various grounds been attributed to him.

### I

As a point of departure, it is well to review the opinion of Marlowe's rationalism held by his contemporaries. The original documents have been reprinted in such modern accounts as Dyce's and Bullen's introductions, Ingram's *Christopher Marlowe and his Associates*, Boas's Introduction to the *Works of Kyd*, Danchin's articles in the *Revue Germanique* (1913-14), Sir Sidney Lee's life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and most recently and inclusively in Tucker Brooke's article on *The Reputation of Christopher Marlowe* in the *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* (xxv, 347-408, June, 1922).

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Amer. Folk-lore*, Vol. XXXII, No. cxxvi, 447-485 (Oct.-Dec., 1919).

Modern admiration of Marlowe, as man and poet, has frequently sought to lift from his reputation the stigma of "atheism" which was heavily laid upon it in his own time. The efforts of the apologists are inconclusive, for the epithet in question is coupled with his name by a variety of allusions, much more definite in statement, and much stronger in cumulative effect, than have served to establish generally accepted biographical facts about other men of the sixteenth century. There were accusations against Marlowe even before his death, and several others within the first decade thereafter, when his life, presenting as it did sensational elements, might seem, according to a reasonable presumption, to be familiar to the men of his time. Robert Greene as early as 1588, a year after Marlowe had been admitted M.A. at Cambridge and had seen the production of the first part of his *Tamburlaine*, speaks in disapproval of a style "daring God out of heaven with that atheist *Tamburlan*" and of "impious instances of intollerable poetry." Marlowe is undoubtedly the "famous gracer of Tragedians" who in the *Groatsworth of Wi* of 1592, the year before the poet's death, is bidden reform by "Greene, who hath said with thee like the foole in his heart, There is no God," and who, unlike the person addressed, has shaken off the influence of the now dead "brother of this Diabolicall Atheisme." Henry Chettle would seem to be referring in terms of moral disapprobation to Marlowe in his *Kind-Harts Dreame* (December, 1592). Gabriel Harvey in his *New Letter of Notable Contents* (September 16, 1593, a few months after Marlowe's death) speaks of the poet as a "Lucian," and in *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593) refers to "no Religion, but precise Marlowisme." Thomas Kyd, the dramatist, writing apparently, like Harvey, shortly after Marlowe had been buried at Deptford, in the letter to Sir John Puckering by which he endeavors to vindicate the blamelessness of his own religion, denies that he "shold love to be familer frend with

one so irreligious," adding that "he was intemp[er]ate & of a cruel hart," and in another letter speaking of his "rash talk."

Three accounts, appearing within a few years of Marlowe's decease, but written by men who were doubtless strangers to him, show that the report of his irreligion was widely current at the close of the sixteenth century, and that his death was used habitually as a horrible example, especially by moralists of a puritanical turn. The most circumstantial of these accounts is that of Richard Beard, who in the *Theatre of Gods Judgements* (1597) gives a harrowing account of Marlowe's murder (incorrectly reported as occurring "in London streets")<sup>1</sup>, and of his final blasphemies, and states, concerning his opinions, "that hee denied God and his sonne Christ, and not only in word blasphemed the trinitie, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote bookees against it, affirming our Sauiour to be but a deceiuer, and Moses to be but a coniurer and seducer of the people, and the holy Bible to be but vaine and idle stories, and all religion but a deuice of pollicie." William Vaughan's *Golden Grove* (1600) tells a similar story, but disposes of Marlowe correctly at Deptford. Meanwhile Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), famous for its listing of Shakespeare's plays, gives another account of Marlowe's murder, refers to Beard, and states that "As Iodelle, a French tragicall poet beeing an Epicure, and an Atheist, made a pitifull end: so our tragicall poet Marlow for his Epicurisme and Atheisme had a tragicall death."

The number of these diatribes could be extended with seventeenth-century accounts, which, however, have obviously not the same evidential value. The statements here set down the apologists would seek to explain or soften in a

<sup>1</sup> Dr J. Leslie Hotson shows that this should probably be read in the singular, that Beard had heard of Marlowe's death as occurring in "London Street, East Greenwich," instead of the neighboring Deptford (*Death of Christopher Marlowe*, p. 39.)

way to save their hero's reputation Greene has an animus he cannot be shown to have been at any time friendly to Marlowe Notorious are the scandal-mongering propensities of Gabriel Harvey, blackly exemplified in his ghoulish gloating over the miserable end of Greene The authenticity of Kyd's alleged letters is impugned, or they are discounted as the prejudiced whimpers of an unprincipled perjurer, seeking to save his own skin by the defamation of the defenceless dead Beard and Vaughan are Puritan fanatics.<sup>1</sup> Meres is elegantly striving for a rhetorical parallelism Yet even if some of these counter-charges be true, the statements taken as a whole must show the existence of a general belief that Marlowe held opinions which to the theologically orthodox of his day seemed damnable

If the document known as the *Baines Libel* be genuine,<sup>2</sup> we may have some evidence as to the nature of the published blasphemies from which Beard and Vaughan so shudderingly recoil. This libel, extant in two MS versions, purports to be the affidavit of one Richard Bome or Baine concerning Marlowe's religious views Its statements are sufficiently startling to-day, in Marlowe's time they must have sounded like the unspeakable utterances of Anti-Christ The libel, which is available in full in Danchin's articles, and somewhat Bowdlerized in Professor Boas's edition of Kyd and in Ingram's *Christopher Marlowe and his Associates*, rejects the approved chronology of 6000 years since Adam, discredits Moses as a "Juggler" and deluder of his people, calls all Protestants "hipocritical Asses" and expresses a preference for formal ritual (including the ceremonies of the Papists),

<sup>1</sup> Hotson's proof that the statements of these concerning Marlowe's death are inaccurate does not affect the value of their writings as evidence for the popular opinion of the poet Beard, Vaughan, and others are doubtless reporting what they had heard

<sup>2</sup> The case for its genuineness is much strengthened by the recent discovery of a letter, apparently of Kyd's, which corroborates many of its statements. (Ford K. Brown in *Lond Times Lit Supp.*, June 2, 1921)

repudiates all the apostles except Paul as “fishermen and base fellows,” utters a scurrilous word about St John the Evangelist, the Women of Samaria, and even Christ, denies the virgin birth, defends the Jews for the crucifixion, and contains these general remarks on religion. “That the firste beginnyng of Religion was only to keep men in awe . . . That, yf he were put to write a new religion, he wolde undertake a more excellent and more admirable methode ” Baines then affirms concerning these opinions that “this Marloe doth not only holde them himself; but almost in every company he commeth, perswadeth men to Atheisme, willinge them not to be afrayed of bugbeares and hobgoblins and utterly scornynge both God and his ministers ”

In spite of much that would be disturbing to a pious Christian of any period, the liberal of to-day will find some things that will seem to him surprisingly modern the items, for instance, concerning Adamistic chronology, the praise of St. Paul, the origins of religion, the virgin birth, and the rejection of the religion of fear. The document certainly represents the views of one who anticipated much that theological progress has slowly arrived at in the centuries since his time

The fragments, conveniently reprinted by Boas, purporting to have been found among the papers of Thomas Kyd, responsibility for which the author of *The Spanish Tragedy* was so frantically trying to remove from his head by dropping the bundle into Marlowe’s grave, are much less sensational. Their position is heretical, but rather that of a unitarian or deist than of an atheist Mr W. D Briggs, by recently identifying the source of these notes,<sup>x</sup> has shown that they are not of Marlowe’s composition, though, if Kyd is telling the truth, he must have been interested in their stand, and may have at one time held opinions not dissimilar There seems little

<sup>x</sup> A heretic’s utterances, quoted in *The Fall of the Late Arran*, by John Proctor (1549) (*Stud. in Philol.*, xx, 153–159, April, 1923)

in their mildly Arianistic views that would have held much meaning for the bold infidel and scoffer who maintained the tenets of the Baines libel. We can, of course, consider either that Marlowe's opinion sharpened into an extreme radicalism in the years before his death, or else that the more blasphemous utterances of the latter document were the defiant "bravados" of which Harvey speaks, and therefore not the sincere and measured utterances of a sober judgment.

The case for the belief of Marlowe's contemporaries in what they called his "atheism" is practically irrefutable. It is folly to deny all the allusions as forgery or slander, as Ingram would seek to do. The cumulative evidence of a pack of proved liars is, to be sure, worth nothing. The cumulative evidence, on the other hand, of a number of witnesses concerning each of whom there is only a reasonable doubt has, as mankind has accepted evidence, a considerable probative value. The popular, uncritical opinion in Marlowe's time considered him atheistical.

Yet the gentleness of the allusions to him by most of his associates in the profession of letters (Greene and Kyd being notable exceptions) and by those who perhaps knew him best, is remarkable, and constitutes a powerful tribute to his personality and his genius. Shakespeare, Peele, Nash, Heywood, and Drayton, all speak of him in terms of affection and unqualified admiration. Their encomia may be found in full in Tucker Brooke's article. These poets did not find Marlowe's religious radicalism of so heinous a sort that they must repudiate him and his works. They did love the man and honor his memory.

If these tributes may seem to cast a doubt on the charges against Marlowe, it should be remembered that he was the known associate of men of advanced thought — Sir Thomas Herriott, for instance, and Sir Walter Raleigh, who is mentioned by a Jesuit pamphleteer as maintaining in 1592 a

"school of atheism," before which, presumably, Marlowe is said to have read an "atheist lecture":<sup>1</sup> Raleigh and his group (among whom we must include Marlowe) were apparently engaged in bold speculations on religious conceptions like "God" and "the soul." There are accounts of Raleigh's opinions preserved which seem to us daring, but not at all atheistical. Yet they were sufficient to bring against him the charges already set down.

The examination of the question from our knowledge of Marlowe's associates arrives at much the same place as the several expressed opinions concerning him. Marlowe was one of a group of speculators on religion who according to the rigid standards of the day were suspected of being atheists and in popular report rather generally convicted of that capital offence. With our superior tolerance we should term them progressive or liberal thinkers, and esteem it creditable in the poet that he had the intelligence to examine and partially reject the fixed dogmas of his time, and the courage frankly to utter his opinion, when utterance might mean the stake. The only really disturbing charges, if we may judge by our own standards, are in the Barnes libel. It may, therefore, be comforting to those who are religiously orthodox and are at the same time devotees of Marlowe, to know that the author of this document was perhaps the "Rychard Bame" who was hanged at Tyburn in 1594.<sup>2</sup> Slander may have been the least of his crimes.

## II

The attempt, now to be made, to check up the charges against Marlowe by resort to his generally acknowledged

<sup>1</sup> Boas *Works of Thomas Kyd*, pp. lxxi-lxxii, D. N. B., Ingram *Christopher Marlowe and His Associates*, pp. 187, 188, J. M. Stone, "Atheism under Elizabeth and James I," *The Month*, lxxxii, 174-187 (1894).

<sup>2</sup> Bullen *Works of Marlowe*, I, lxix, and Danchin, in *Rev. Germ.*, Jan.-Feb., 1914, p. 59.

works, needs perhaps a defence. Opinions expressed in any piece of fiction are obviously to be charged, not to the writer (unless he speaks in person), but to his puppets. Successful fiction presents this paradox. the finer the workmanship, the less may we learn of the writer from his creations. Axiomatically, the rash attempt to discover the personality of a writer in the utterances of his characters is most fraught with uncertainties and negations when the work of a great dramatist is examined. Yet even here we are not at a nonplus. There are few who will not read in Hamlet's directions to the players the reflections of Shakespeare himself on the actor's art, while, as President Neilson not long ago pointed out, by the study of types which Shakespeare persistently presents, not once but many times, in the search for tendencies in human character which he consistently holds up as admirable or base, in oft-repeated sentiments, may be found reflections of his own wisdom and his own philosophy. A good case can be made out by this method, to cite one instance, for Shakespeare's detestation of the humbug of sentimentalism.<sup>1</sup> A writer less thoroughly dramatic, like Ben Jonson, exposes himself at every turn. Can there be any question of Ben's attitude toward astrology, alleged demoniacal possession, so-called magic, and the thousand and one "arts" of the sorcerer and quack of his time?

Were Marlowe a supreme creator of character, we need not despair of finding, if we proceed with caution, some reflection of himself in his plays. But our task is easier, since Marlowe never sinks himself perfectly in his characters. The family likeness of his great heroes has been frequently pointed out: the impassioned cravings, the towering aspirations, of Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Faustus. In nearly all of Marlowe's plays, the characters in whom the dramatist shows interest are possessed by "that overwhelming evil ambition and

<sup>1</sup> W. A. Neilson. *Essentials of Poetry*, pp. 210-213.

malignant selfishness in which a rather curious twist of Marlowe's genius made him see the highest reach of human glory ”<sup>1</sup> To the celebrated list just named may be added young Mortimer, Guise, and the old Queen (*Massacre at Paris*) On the basis of this prepossession of Marlowe's, Tucker Brooke makes out a strong case for the poet's creation of York, Queen Margaret, and Richard, of the *Contention* and the *True Tragedy* Conversely, Marlowe demonstrates no ability to appreciate simplicity, humility, gentleness, or quiet virtue His gentle characters are weaklings (*vide* Mycetes, Calyphas, Edmund in *Edward II*, and Henry of Navarre) The poet “appears never to have been able to separate virtue from mediocrity or to portray vivid personality except in the prosecution of godless and desperate extravagance” His women, again, are notoriously lay figures, the only show of success being with the wicked ones A reader peruses his plays in vain for women of subtlety and charm, a score of whom will at once be recalled from Shakespeare's theatre Of humor he had none, or certainly, if some of the comics in *Faustus* and other works be accepted as his, humor of a very restricted and not very genuine quality The tragedy of human existence he felt intensely, but in most of his plays in practically the same terms. in the failure of man to accomplish that which his godlike spirit had conceived, owing to the finite frailties of the body It would seem to be the tragedy of the poet's own life as well

Marlowe can thus be shown to have profound limitations as a dramatist Both the strengths and weaknesses of his own mind are freely exhibited in his plots, his characters, and the sentiments stressed in his plays. The man himself is revealed there to an extent certainly unsurpassed in the work of any other major dramatist of the Elizabethan period It is accordingly not idle to expect that some reflection of Marlowe's

<sup>1</sup> Tucker Brooke “Authorship of Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI,” in *Trans Conn Acad of Arts and Sciences*, xvii (July, 1912), 156–159

own thought may be found in the theological concepts of his various characters.

If this be true, there is little ground for a belief in his absolute atheism. that is, in the categorical denial of the existence of a God. Tamburlaine believes

There is a God, full of revenging wrath  
From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,  
Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey<sup>1</sup>

The story of *Dr. Faustus* depends utterly upon a faith in God. Mephistophilis is one of the angels who fought against God and fell with Lucifer. Faustus in his contract abjures God, promising never to name Him or pray to Him, yearns, nevertheless, in fits of contrition, to turn to God. The Good and Evil Angels debate His mercy. In the powerful final soliloquy, Faustus's tortured imagination sees "where God Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!" The fervor of this great speech—the most impassioned that Marlowe ever wrote—makes us wonder if it could possibly be the utterance of a purely dramatic conception. In the *Jew of Malta*, God is not once invoked by Jew or gentile, churchman or layman. *Dido*, with its classical atmosphere, presents no evidence, *Edward II* practically none. In *The Massacre at Paris*, Navarre is represented as feeling that God is directing him in the justice of his cause.<sup>2</sup> There are some half-dozen invocations by this hero. Marlowe conceived him a devout person, of deep faith. Navarre's consistency on this point testifies to a firmer dramatic conception on Marlowe's part than usual. His faith should not accordingly be interpreted too narrowly as the poet's.

If the references to God are fairly numerous, and not of the kind which imply a genuine and militant atheism, those to Christ and to Christian dogmas are, on the other hand, ex-

<sup>1</sup> Tucker Brooke, *Works of Marlowe, Tamburlaine*, pt. 2, ll. 4294-4296

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid., Massacre*, ll. 42, 43, 547, 604, 714, 795, 934, 1016, 1080, 1088.

tremely few. In *The Massacre* occurs a bit of anti-Papism when Mountsorrell, one of the agents of the massacre, interposes to one praying by Christ, the Saviour,

Christ, villain!  
Why, darest thou presume to call on Christ  
Without the intercession of some saint? <sup>2</sup>

In the second part of *Tamburlaine*, Christ responds, so the Mahometans think, to their just prayers, giving them victory over the recreant Christians <sup>2</sup> *Faustus*, although based on a Christian theology, seldom mentions Christ (as distinct from God) The most important allusions are Faustus's appeal, after being solicited by the Good Angel,

Ah, Christ, my Saviour,  
Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul!

followed by Lucifer's admonishment,

Thou talk'st of Christ, contrary to thy promise,

and the tortured outcries of the last great soliloquy, including the famous

See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!  
One drop would save my soul, half a drop

It should be said that a theological distinction between God and Christ may not be clearly drawn, and God the Son is doubtless often in mind when the former is named

Though the mention of Christ is rare, and the references to God neither numerous nor (on the whole) illuminating, allusions to devil and hell are much more striking Lucifer, Belzebub, the constant attendant Mephistophilis, Baliol, Belcher, and sundry nameless devils are of the *dramatis personae* of *Dr Faustus*, and they are represented, quite traditionally, as being fallen angels, who conspired against God and are forever damned Only in this play do their devilships actually ap-

<sup>2</sup> Brooke, *op. cit.*, ll. 359-361

\* Ethel Seaton in *Lond. Times Lit. Supp.*, June 16, 1921, seeks to show that these incidents follow directly historical accounts.

pear, and when elsewhere referred to, they are anonymous, except for a strictly classical Dis, Rhadamanth, Aeacus, Cerberus, or "Gorgon, prince of Hell."<sup>1</sup> In surprisingly few cases are vicious characters spoken of as "devils" or "fiends"; the monstrous Barabas is not so epithetized, and even Tamburlaine, to those who suffer beneath his heel, seems not, characteristically, "a fiend of hell," but rather a creature of superhuman birth and might<sup>2</sup>

The term "hell" seems rather a favorite of Marlowe's. Either so stated, or synonymously, it occurs some scores of times in his acknowledged work. To Faustus, in his last speech, the incessant pain of hell without end is a very real and terrible thing, rushing with the revolution of the clock upon him. Except for this vivid and poignant scene, hell, though invoked often, is referred to in terms much more conventional. In some dozen striking passages, it is decidedly a classical hell: Avernus pool, the banks of Erebus with its ugly ferryman, Charon's shore, Lethe, Styx, and Phlegethon, Cocytus, Orcus' burning gulf, the abode of Cimmerian spirits.<sup>3</sup> In these numerous cases the poet is unquestionably adding a classical adornment rather than demonstrating his faith. The preponderance of them is in *Tamburlaine*, proud exhibit of the youthful scholar fresh from his studies at Cambridge!<sup>4</sup> Other uses of the term are of the nature of conventional curses. Persons hated are consigned to hell or invited to experience its everlasting torments. Such material is admitted — indeed demanded — by the customary violence of Marlovian language, and may have not much greater significance than strong language under similar circumstances to-day. In general, the evidential value of the fairly frequent allusions to hell and its pains is not great, with the single exception of those in

<sup>1</sup> Brooke, *op. cit.*, *Tamb*, pt. 1, l. 1389, pt. 2, ll. 3846, 3974, 4209.

<sup>2</sup> Especially *Tamb*, pt. 1, ll. 820-830

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *Tamb*, pt. 1, ll. 1656, 2025, 2245, pt. 2, ll. 2946, 3203, 4400, *Few of Malta*, ll. 1404, 1405; *Edward II*, ll. 1956, 1957.

*Faustus* Here also, as in the case of the other theological concepts, this play stands sharply apart

Such important Christian dogmas as sin, repentance, and remorse, find a place, again, almost uniquely in *Faustus*. The fundamental Christian dogma of the immortality of the soul is of course implicit in the play, especially in the several appeals of the Good Angel, and specifically in that of the Old Man and in Faustus's frenzied final speculation,

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?  
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?

Tamburlaine is busied rather with this world's triumphs and rewards, yet twice he seems to express a belief in the immortality of the soul.<sup>1</sup> The other plays are less concerned with the doctrine, but a conventional adherence to it is, as must be expected from a poet writing for a sixteenth-century audience, a matter of course. A disbeliever could not have denied the doctrine, even if he had wished, he could, however, have avoided allusions to it, and this Marlowe certainly does not do in *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*. If these be early plays (1587–1589), and written anterior to *The Jew of Malta*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and *Edward II*, as has been generally believed, although lately questioned by Tucker Brooke in the case of *Faustus*,<sup>2</sup> there may be surmised a growing reluctance on Marlowe's part to discuss the dogma. The tempting conjecture has already been made that Marlowe's views may have become more extreme, or that at least he may have become more fearless in their expression, in the years immediately preceding his death.

A rationalism which contradicts the conception, elsewhere stated, of hell as a place of sulphurous flames and burning

<sup>1</sup> Brooke, *op. cit.* pt. I, ll. 431, pt. 2, ll. 4619, 4620. See, however, an interesting interpretation of a celebrated passage (pt. I, ll. 878–880), by G. A. Cole in *Lond. Times Lit. Supp.*, July 14, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Tucker Brooke "The Marlowe Canon," *P. M. L. A.*, XXXVII, 3, p. 384 (Sept., 1922).

marl, is found by the casual reader in two celebrated speeches of Mephistophilis to Faustus,

Why this is hell, nor am I out of it,  
and

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd  
In one self place, for where we are is hell,  
And where hell is, there must we ever be

Many have read here an unorthodox and modern view of hell's torments as being experienced in this world — a view which they have been strongly tempted to accept as Marlowe's own, but it should be noted that Mephistophilis is discussing the state of devils, and not of men. A recent study is probably right in finding here an entirely orthodox idea of the fallen angel being attended by the pains of hell, in whatever place he might find himself.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt, however, about the word of Machiavel as presenter of *The Jew of Malta*,

I count religion but a childish toy,  
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.

Here is an utterance which satisfactorily represents the stand of a reputed rationalist and member of Sir Walter Raleigh's "school of atheism." It sounds strangely like some of the statements of the Baines libel, if the latter be regarded as garbled, and in part misrepresentations. On the whole, there is little in the plays which would demonstrate the full acceptance of Christian doctrines as other than conventional, except for the passionate outcries of Dr. Faustus. There is, on the other hand, nothing, except possibly the speech of Machiavel, that seems the utterance of an out-and-out infidel and blasphemer. There seems certainly evidence here for the epithet of "atheist" as the sixteenth century understood the term, but none for the epithet as the twentieth century understands it.

<sup>2</sup> W. D. Briggs "Marlowe's *Faustus*, 305-318, 548-570," *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxxviii, No. 7, 385-393 (Nov., 1923).

## III

The intellectual history of mankind presents few developments so thorough-going and so rapidly consummated as the progress in rationalism taking place from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. An illuminating account of the phenomenon and its contributing causes may be found in W E H Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe*. Conceptions regarded for ages as fundamental were abandoned in the relatively short period of a few generations. This progress discredited many phases of the occult. witchcraft, magic, conjuration, divination, all kinds of mystic quackery, went into the scrap-heap along with the other exploded theories and lost faiths of mankind. The turn-about was made, to be sure, only by the cultivated, intelligent classes. The uneducated abandoned their ancient beliefs only imperfectly, or not at all, as indeed they hold them in considerable measure to-day.

The very complete change just sketched has so transformed our ideas and our sympathies that we find it exceedingly difficult to approximate the state of mind which was general, indeed almost universal, during the Elizabethan period. The tales of the twelfth century Friar Bacon, and in a later epoch of Tritheim, Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus — of Dr Johann Faustus, indeed — seemed undoubtedly authentic, for were not magicians of the same learned type alive and operating? Witness Dr John Dee, to whom Queen Elizabeth resorted, and who, although in his own conception an earnest and high-minded investigator of the occult, was known by the public to be engaged in mysterious and fearful operations.<sup>1</sup> With more vulgar conjurers, astrologers, fortune-tellers, exorcisers, and medical quacks — figures represented, typically, by such men as Reade, Forman, Lambe, and Hartley —

<sup>1</sup> J O Halliwell (ed.), *Private Diary of Dr John Dee*, and Charlotte Fell Smith, *John Dee*

Elizabethan life was crowded. An active trade proved the faith of the public. There were "wise women," who professed minor magic arts and added a business of midwifery, there were witches, using familiar spirits, obtained by compact with the devil, to satisfy petty grudges, to harm or to kill neighbors. Witchcraft was almost universally believed in, by the learned as well as the ignorant. The scholarly discussions of the seventeenth century prove the faith of the former, the many witch trials, with their readily accepted evidence and their numerous convictions, establish the opinions of the public generally.<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of Marlowe toward these various practitioners of the occult and their several so-called "arts" is a matter of the utmost importance in understanding his mind and the quality of his rationalism. A contrast can here be shown between Marlowe on the one hand and most of the major Elizabethan dramatists on the other. Selected writers, whose attitude is clearly enough exhibited in their works to illuminate the comparison, may here be briefly touched upon — such writers, for instance, as Shakespeare, Chapman, Middleton, Ben Jonson, and Greene.

There is nothing in Shakespeare's work to show that he did not accept the dogmas of his time. His handling of witch, magician, and conjurer follows his practice generally — he presents the conception of them current, although touching this conception with the colors of the imagination. The witches in *Macbeth* have the aspect, and perform most of the functions, of the common village witch, although they seem also to play the part of the Norns, or Fates. Prospero is surely a magician of the most dignified, most scholarly and most noble type, but he nevertheless wields his authority by virtue of wand, book, and robe, compels spirits to do him service, gives the customary exhibitions of his art, prepares a charmed

<sup>2</sup> See my article in *Journ. Amer. Folk-lore*, and references.

banquet, and in general functions like any other powerful practitioner of magic. The schoolmaster Pinch, in *The Comedy of Errors*, exorcises the fiends which must be possessing Antipholus of Syracuse and his man Joan of Arc in *1 Henry VI* passed through Shakespeare's reworking hand without any alteration of her as a witch of a somewhat revolting type, nor was any significant change made in *2 Henry VI* of Margery Jordan, "the cunning witch," and Roger Bolingbroke, the conjurer, who raise spirits for the utterance of political prophecy. The future Richard III charges the blasting of his arm to witchcraft. Malvolio is confined as a madman and bound, in order to eject the evil spirit. In none of these scenes is there any hint of skepticism. Shakespeare's personal opinions were either those of the public for which he wrote, or, if different, were not so strongly felt but that he could suppress them in the interests of policy and good art. Perhaps an even more significant test is to be found in the incidental occurrence of words such as witch, devil, hell, charms, incantations, et cetera. The poet is not likely to employ these terms frequently, and to make them the basis of his imagery, unless they are on his mind, a part of the tissue of his thought. The topics named are often mentioned by Shakespeare, there are, for example, 236 uses of the word "devil" in the dramatic works, 64 of witch, witchcraft, and similar words. The significant function of ghosts and apparitions in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Cæsar*, and elsewhere, displays his very sincere — indeed, almost reverent — attitude toward related phenomena.

The dramatic works of George Chapman show considerable use of the occult in its various phases with, again, entire absence of any note of skepticism. In the *Bussy D'Ambois* plays the spirits Behemoth and Cartophylax are conjured up to foretell the future, and there are whole batteries of ghosts. In the *Byron* plays there are an astrologer and a gentleman re-

puted to have skill in magic, who is accused by the fallen hero a dozen times of practising witchcraft upon him In *Cæsar and Pompey*, the devil Ophioneus appears to the ruined knave, Fronto. There is a transformation by sorcery into a mandrake in *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*. *The Gentleman Usher* has an entertainment of an enchanter with spirits, and references to crystal gazing, exorcizing, and a gypsy sorceress.<sup>1</sup> There are few plays of Chapman's which have not scenes, or at any rate important allusions, drawn from the occult. The number of incidental references, although by no means overwhelming, strikes one as large. I have collected some hundred of them in a cursory reading of Parrott's two volumes.

Middleton's interest in the occult seems even keener than Chapman's. There is a device of a haunted chamber (*Blurt*), a case of demoniacal possession, duly exorcized (*Phoenix*), magic quacks and mountebanks (*The Widow* and *Family of Love*), a real succubus (*Mad World, My Masters*), an alchemist and cunning man (*Anything for a Quiet Life*), gipsy fortunetellers (*Spanish Gipsy* and *More Dissemblers*),<sup>2</sup> and in Middleton's full-length play of the occult, *The Witch*, a vast amount of devil-lore gathered from the witch-mongers and from popular superstition. There is a profusion of references throughout his works to demons, devils, familiar spirits, love philters, conjuration, conjuror's glass, crystal gazing, witches, lycanthropi. I know of no playwright of the period who dwells so persistently as Middleton on magic, witchcraft, and allied themes. He manifests a curiosity which at times seems prurient. His allusions to the supernatural have a strongly realistic smack. They are especially concerned with the more vulgar and sordid practices of the devotees of occult arts.

<sup>1</sup> In Parrott's ed., *Bussy D'Ambois*, IV, ii, V, iii, *Byron's Conspiracy*, II, i, 39-50, 104-128, III, iii, *Byron's Tragedy*, V, ii, 136-307, V, iv, 88-92; *Cæsar and Pompey*, II, i; *Blind Beggar*, vi.

<sup>2</sup> In Bullen's ed., *Blurt*, IV, ii, *Phoenix*, V, i, *Mad World*, IV, i, iv, *Anything for a Quiet Life*, I, i, 92, 322, V, ii, 274 seq.

Among all the Elizabethan dramatists the most robust and powerfully displayed attitude toward the occult is that of Ben Jonson. His plays are notable for the minute realism of their portraits of astrologers, alchemists, pretended demons, quacks, and fake mystics generally, and their zealous exposure of these frauds, the rottenness of whose impostures the poet unquestionably loathed. The most striking scenes are in *Volpone* (V, viii), *The Alchemist* (*passim*), *The Devil is an Ass* (V, iii, v) and the masque of *The Fortunate Isles*, but there are speeches, allusions, and incidental references everywhere. In the incomplete pastoral *The Sad Shepherd*, and in *The Masque of Queens*, Ben Jonson displays the poet's and antiquarian's impressions of witchcraft and its commonly accepted attributes and paraphernalia. All honor to Ben Jonson, as a man of hard sense, who refused to be deluded by hocus-pocus. His everywhere demonstrated militant skepticism toward the false occult ranks him as one of the most penetrating minds of his time. Yet we look in vain for any thoroughgoing denial of the devil and his works in human society, while we know from Ben's own word that he had been at times an ardent churchman, and indeed for a period of years a Papist.

If it be objected that all the writers cited above — Shakespeare, Chapman, Middleton, and Ben Jonson — lived, or produced most of their work after the time of Marlowe, I may cite a contemporary who nevertheless employs the supernatural freely: to wit, Robert Greene. His use of necromantic contests, transportation on the devil's back, the brazen head, and the perspective glass in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is much fuller, so far as paraphernalia are concerned, than the magic of *Dr Faustus*, and there are, in addition, a whole chorus of fairies (headed by Oberon) in *James IV*, the enchantress Melissa in *Orlando Furioso*, the enchantress Medea, not to speak of Mahomet's brazen head, spewing forth fire

and prophecy, in *Alphonsus*, magi who work wonders, the swallowing up of a character in a flame of fire, a devil-disguise, a hand from the heavens brandishing a burning sword, Jonah and the whale, and other marvels in *A Looking Glass for London and England* (written with Thomas Lodge). With characteristic lack of restraint Greene spreads the supernatural in much profusion through his several plays. He seems mostly interested in its possibilities for spectacle. Middletonian vulgar realism and Jonsonian satire are alike absent. There is no hint of anything except full credence of the premises on which these supernatural acts and happenings are based.

The writers who have been mentioned all display, then, a lively interest in the supernatural, although they are concerned with various manifestations thereof and place their emphasis variously. How is it with Marlowe? *Doctor Faustus* at once springs to mind as one of the most notable Elizabethan plays of magic. A brief résumé of the plot will fix the magic content of the play in mind. Faustus rejects the learned professions one by one and settles on magic as being the only study whose dominion

Stretcheth as far as does the mind of man

After receiving instructions from Valdes and Cornelius, he summons Mephistophilis with full Latin formula, has him garb himself like a friar, disputes with him concerning problems of the soul and of hell; signs with his blood a deed of his soul to Lucifer after a period of twenty-four years during which Mephistophilis shall serve him; questions further with Mephistophilis; is dissuaded from marriage by means of a she-devil with fireworks; receives books of magic, is presented with a show of the seven deadly sins; boxes the Pope's ear and snatches away his banquet (for which he is cursed with bell, book, and candle); raises for the Emperor a vision of Alexander and his paramour and plays a trick on a scoffing

knight, sells a horse-courser a horse which changes, on his driving it into the water, into a bottle of hay, plays another trick on the latter, who is confounded to find he has snatched off the doctor's leg, fetches for the Duchess of Vanholt ripe grapes from India, raises for his scholars a vision of Helen of Troy, summons the fair vision a second time, bids farewell to his scholars, and then in great anguish of spirit gives up his soul to the fiend. Four times the Good and Evil Angels appear, and contend over him, and near the end the Old Man takes up the function of the former. Faustus is wavering and frequently repentant, on one occasion he is rebuked and punished for calling on the name of Christ. Yet on each occasion he eventually yields to the evil solicitations, is convinced that he must carry through his bargain, and that he must be damned soul and body, as he is at the catastrophe of the play. There are also several scenes (all comic) in which Faustus does not figure: one in which Faustus's servant, Wagner, makes merry with the Clown by means of the devils Baliol and Belcher, one in which Robin the Ostler steals the Vintner's goblet and conjures clumsily with one of Dr. Faustus's books, for which presumption he and his companion, Rafe, are chased by Mephistophilis about the stage with squibs and crackers, and are to be transformed into an ape and a dog. Some of these comics are under vehement suspicion of being by other hands than Marlowe's, but he cannot, I fear, be acquitted of all of them.

This epitome presents the material of *Dr Faustus*, it does not, I think, interpret its purport and spirit. Considered in its bare outlines — the stark formulae and stage business of devils, devil's compact, magician, magician's shows and tricks, yes, even to its squibs and firecrackers — it would seem to present no problem to one familiar with the sixteenth-century belief in the occult and with sixteenth-century dramatic practice. Its thought and its machinery are alike normal and

conventional, orthodox and ordinary. It is just what we might expect from a child of the sixteenth century who had decided to write on a magic theme. Observe, I am here speaking of the *material* only.

When we turn from *Dr Faustus* to the other plays of Marlowe, we at once see it in its true light as an anomaly in Marlowe's theatre, unique among all his works. One searches in vain among the six other plays accepted as his, and indeed (except in his translations) among his non-dramatic work, for a single scene which presents magician, witch, devil, ghost, or any agency of the supernatural whatever. This record is unparalleled in the work of any other of the greater Elizabethan dramatists (unless it be Peele). In every other case with which I am familiar, an interest in the supernatural has been attested, not by one character, scene, or play, but by many. Marlowe has one play to offer (full and rich of its kind to be sure). The testimony of the rest of his plays is silence.

One may go further, and apply the test of individual allusions and imagery. In these Marlowe's lines are poverty-stricken to the last degree. The only categories at all numerous are "devil" and "hell," the general significance of which has been already estimated. There is a certain passive acceptance of astrology, one or two conventional uses of the terms "charm," "enchantment," "spirits," and the like—indeed, who can avoid them even to-day? By a figure of speech *Tamburlaine* is in the Prologue considered a "tragic glass." But Olympia's mention of the magic ointment to protect her skin from the steel's point is only her tragic trick to make Theridamas stab her; the old wives' tales of spirits and ghosts which Barabas mentions he himself does not believe, and the common outburst against Tamburlaine and Barabas does not consider them devils or devil-aided, but rather men of super-human powers or of inhuman cruelty. There is an allusion

to the classical Circe, and her changing of shapes, one disgusted sneer by Catherine at her weakling son Henry,

Thou art a changeling, not my son,

the hurling of the perfectly natural epithet “cursed hag,” by Dido at the nurse who brings her ill tidings, followed by the more pointed

Traitors too keend and cursed sorceress

The allusion to the woman “famous for arts” is merely *Aeneid*, iv, 483–493, much reduced. Quite amusingly, the only time in Marlowe’s plays that a character is called an “old witch” is in *Dido*, where the words are addressed to Juno by Venus.<sup>1</sup> The passages and allusions just mentioned are not merely representative, as in the case of writers previously discussed, but the only passages and allusions of significance in the Marlovian canon, *Faustus* being excepted. The list seems incredibly meagre, when one comes to Marlowe after extensive reading among other Elizabethan dramatists.

Additions to and continuations of Marlowe’s works—to wit, in the late quartos of *Dr Faustus* and in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth sestads of *Hero and Leander*—show significant differences from Marlowe’s practice in the treatment of the material we have been considering. The *Faustus* quartos from 1616 to 1663 enlarge with gusto the allusions to devils and the pangs of hell. At ll. 1422–23 they make Faustus assert,

O thou bewitching fiend, 't was thy temptation  
Hath rob'd me of eternal happiness—

a statement which palliates the guilt that in the 1604 quarto is squarely laid upon the protagonist’s shoulders. Added charms in the late quartos are clearly not of the au-

<sup>1</sup> Brooke’s Works of Marlowe, *Tamb*, pt 2, ll 3940 seq., *Jew of Malta*, ll 663–669, *Edw II*, l 468, *Massacre*, l 1086, *Dido*, ll. 835, 842, 1624–1629, 1683–1685

thentic kind They are Englished and trivialized, containing inconsistent ornamental allusions to Hecate and Pluto's love of Proserpine, they are indeed so innocuous that one is surprised to find that the devils rise at them from their "sooty palace" At the end of the play "hell is discovered," while the Bad Angel gloats on the physical tortures with which he seems on very familiar terms

Now *Faustus* let thine eyes with horror stare  
 Into that vast perpetual torture-house  
 There are the furies tossing damned souls  
 On burning forks their bodies broil in lead  
 There are live quarters broiling on the coals,  
 That ne'er can die this ever-burning chair  
 Is for o'er-tortured souls to rest them in  
 These, that are fed with sops of flaming fire,  
 Were gluttons, and lov'd only delicates,  
 And laughed to see the poor starve at their gates  
 But yet all these are nothing, thou shalt see  
 Ten thousand tortures that more horrid be

The tortures of hell, according to Marlowe's authentic text, are not specified in concrete terms, and indeed are only feared in Faustus's tormented imagination The inserted passage shows very clearly the difference between Marlowe's practice and that of his more normal continuer

A few lines in Chapman's conclusion of *Hero and Leander* are likewise illuminating Chapman's strong interest in the occult — an interest which made it serve constantly for incidental allusions and for imagery — has previously been stated In Marlowe's beginning of the poem (the first two sestads), there are no allusions whatever to the topics considered in this paper. Chapman's part has, as we should expect, a number:

his late enriched arms,  
 In whose white circle Love writ all his charms

A rich disparent Pentacle she weares,  
 Drawn full of circles and strange characters

One hand a mathematic crystal sways

Of Hero, fearing the operation of sympathetic magic — similar to the case of a waxen image — as she embroiders Leander's picture on her scarf

but in her strength of thought,  
She feared she pricked Leander as she wrought

And then as she was working of his eye,  
She thought to prick it out to quench her ill  
But as she pricked, it grew more perfect still

The virgin tapers that on th' altar stood,  
When she inflamed them, burned as red as blood  
All sad ostents of that too near success,

but when she looks at his picture, love's joys are renewed

The odors sweetned, and the fires burned clear,  
Leander's form left no ill object there

In every drop a torturing Spirit flew,  
It pierced so deeply, and it burned so blue

But pleasing to th' infernall Empery,  
Under whose ensigns Wars and Discords fight

And one, which may have some topical significance, where the poet speaks of the lover worshiping his love instead of the gods

And rail the brain-bald world at what it will,  
That's the grand atheism that reigns in it still :

In place of two unmodified uses of "hell" on the part of Marlowe (i, 468, ii, 334), uses more than matched on Chapman's part, we find also "Hell's blackest dart" (v, 494), "Hell's blackest reign" (vi, 170), there is "the devil Venus (vi, 290), there are "charmed lips" and "charmed skips" (v, 75, vi, 25) Nothing is to be made of these slight references, except that they are more numerous and more elaborate than Marlowe's, but the contrast between the negative record of the first two sestads of *Hero and Leander* and the by no means inconsiderable demonology of the last four establishes very strikingly

\* *Hero and Leander*, iii, 97, 98, 123, 124, 131, iv, 58–67, 128–139, 155–165, 343, 344, v, 330, 331, vi, 190, 191

the difference in the thought on these matters between Marlowe, the radical and rationalist, and Chapman, the more typical man of his time

The review just made of Marlowe's work has demonstrated that all of it except *Faustus* exhibits a mind that had no interest in the occult, not even to the extent of drawing on it for random illustration and occasional imagery. One is led, then, to speculate on the apparent incongruity, in Marlowe's product, of *Faustus* with its magic formulae, machinery, and business. Yet the incongruity seems to vanish as one reads and rereads the play. The magic then recedes until it becomes incidental and mechanical, a mere background, the scenes remembered, the ones which stirred the poet, and on which he lavished his power, are the fierce contentions of Faustus's divided spirit and the last supreme agony. Marlowe found the magic in the *Faustbuch*, and he used it as he found it, reducing instead of expanding, putting nothing of himself into this material, without magic, there could be no Faustus story, and the Faustus story was just such a one as to kindle Marlowe's imagination, and leave him no rest till it had driven him on to composition. When we consider the negative record of Marlowe everywhere else, we must conclude that no interest in magic *per se* drew him to *Faustus*. What attracted him is not difficult to infer when we recall what we know of his other plays and of his own personality. Faustus has Marlowe's hunger, and the hunger of Marlowe's heroes, for experience and power, his soul "still climbing after knowledge infinite, and always moving as the restless spheres." The terrible catastrophe of the legend stirred Marlowe as well, for him the great tragedy of existence lay in man's utter inability to make real the infinite aspirations toward which his spirit climbed. Thus it appears that the character of Faustus and his spiritual struggle were to Marlowe incentive enough for the writing of the play, and the incongruity of a play of

magic in the work of the everywhere exhibited rationalist at once vanishes

Marlowe's life and works are mutually consistent, and the evidence of the latter confirms the poet's reputation for radicalism in the religious and intellectual spheres. The man whose attitude toward the supernatural, and especially the various manifestations of the occult, was for his time so abnormal, was clearly such a one as to draw upon himself the cry of "atheism" attested by contemporary accounts. The works of the poet, it is hoped, are shown through the analysis here undertaken to be of very considerable importance in helping us to understand the mind of that enlightened thinker and brave man whom the Genius of progressive thought must ever recognize as one of her sons.

#### IV

In the analyses of the preceding pages, I have limited myself to the plays which have attained an established place in the Marlowe canon, to wit, *Tamburlaine* (Parts I and II), *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II*, *Dido*, and *The Massacre at Paris*. There are in addition thirteen plays which have on various grounds at one time or other been attributed to him. These are *1 Henry VI* (in part or in earlier form), *The First Part of the Contention between York and Lancaster*, *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *Arden of Feversham*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III*, *The Taming of a Shrew* (the earlier play, not Shakespeare's), *Selimus*, *Edward III*, *A Larum for London*, *The Maiden's Holiday* (non-extant), and *Lust's Dominion*.<sup>1</sup> Without going into any of the other evidence, I now propose to see whether our knowledge of Marlowe's attitude toward the occult can lead us to any presumptions concerning his alleged part in these plays. Such an examina-

<sup>1</sup> See Brooke's article on the Marlowe canon. I omit some recent conjectures.

tion can of course arrive at no precise conclusions, it can be only of the nature of general evidence, yet, I think, is not destitute of value if made with caution It is obviously of little weight in plays which are felt to be only in part Marlowe's, unless the conceptions of the supernatural are fundamental, or unless the contributions of our poet can be pretty well arrived at

I have no remarks of any interest to offer in connection with *The True Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of a Shrew*, *Edward III*, and *A Larum for London* On the others I append brief comments

(1) *I Henry VI* I agree with Mr Tucker Brooke and Mr H D Gray that Marlowe was not the author of *I Henry VI* (conjectural earlier form) The conception of Joan of Arc as a witch is fundamental in the play, and expressed with vehemence in scene after scene She employs and rewards familiar spirits, confesses (like many another witch), to a lewd life, curses and blasphemous. The later scenes dealing with Joan present witch lore of a sordidness, with a revolting realism, unmatched, indeed not even suggested, in the known work of Marlowe I do not believe he could have had any part in them

(2) *The First Part of the Contention* has fundamental to its plot the utterance of an incantation by Margery Jordan, "the cunning witch of Ely," and Roger Bolingbroke, "the conjurer," the raising of the spirit Askalon, his prophecies concerning the great ones of the state, the punishment of Eleanor, Duchess of Gloster, who instigated the conjuration, and the eventual fulfillment of the ambiguous prophecies. These plot incidents are suspicious, yet since they are not invention, but only a rather close following of the chronicle, I see no reason why they may not have been written by even so thorough-going a skeptic as Marlowe, provided he had been commissioned to write a play on the period covered by the *Conten-*

*tion* It should be noted that the incidental allusions are somewhat more numerous than usual with Marlowe

(3) *The Troublesome Reign of King John* Marlovian language is rather free in its use of terms like "devil" and "hell," but it does not in any play approach the strong speech of *The Troublesome Reign* Witches and devils are said to delude, characters are called witches, wizards, and devils, hell's horrors, plagues, rages, thralls, fiends are frequently mentioned<sup>1</sup> Marlowe exhibits nowhere, not even in *Tamburlaine*, such a succession of infernal epithets It is not conceivable that his habit of thought and his diction at any time changed so radically

(4) *Arden of Feversham* presents no pointed evidence, although the accusations of witchcraft are disturbingly repeated<sup>2</sup>

(5) *Richard III* contains Gloucester's charge of witchcraft as causing the blasting of his arm (III, iv), the prophecy of "G" which so disturbed Clarence (I, i), portentous and accusing dreams — Clarence's (I, iv), Stanley's (III, ii), and Richard's on the battlefield, with its trooping throng of the murdered (V, iii) It has also in the speeches of Anne, Queen Margaret, and others (especially I, ii, and iii, and IV, iv), the most thorough-going set of hellish epithets, save one, with which I am familiar Richard is a "fiend conjured by a black magician," a "devil" (many times), a "devilish slave," a "monster of hell," a "son of hell," a "hell-hound," "hell's black intelligencer," a "cacodemon" Gloucester gives the Queen as good. She is a "foul wrinkled witch," a "hateful wither'd hag" A pleasant war of words! Marlowe showers us nowhere with such a pelting rain of "hells" and "devils" It would be quite contrary to his habit of mind to do so How-

<sup>1</sup> *Tudor Facs Texts, First Part*, C2v4, D2r29, E4v8–20, Fv15–34, F3r8, 16, 17, F3v4, 8, 9, 10, 12, F4rL 16–19, G2v, G3r, G3v1, 3, 9, G4r1, 12, 13, 26, G4v6, 8, 11, 20, *Sec Part*, A4v, B, B2r20, Cr7, C2r12–21, Dv, 14, 16, E2r27, 28, 33, E2v11–16

<sup>2</sup> Tucker Brooke *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, III, v, 78, 79, 93–95, IV, iv, 104, 152, 153.

ever much *Richard III* may imitate Marlowe, it cannot in its extant form be his handiwork

(6) I do not think that *Selimus* is by Marlowe, yet it is interesting as containing a passage giving a rationalistic view of religion which may very well have been similar to Marlowe's, lines which, indeed, recall some of the phrases of the Barnes libel:

SELIMUS Then some sage man, above the vulgar wise,  
Knowing that laws could not in quiet dwell,  
Unless they were observed did first devise  
The names of Gods, religion, heaven, and hell,  
And gan of pains, and fained rewards to tell  
Pains for those men which did neglect the law,  
Rewards for those that liv'd in quiet awe  
Whereas indeed they were mere fictions,  
And if they were not, *Selim* thinks they were  
And these religions observations,  
Only bugbears to keep the world in fear,  
And make men quietly a yoke to bear  
So that religion of itself a Babel,  
Was only found to make us peaceable

SINAM Oh yet my Lord after your Highness' death,  
There is a hell and a revenging God

SELIMUS Tush, *Sinam*, these are school conditions,  
To fear the devil or his cursed dam  
Thinkst thou I care for apparitions  
Of *Sisyphus* and of his backward stone,  
And poor *Iason*'s lamentable moan?  
Now I think the cave of damned ghosts  
Is but a tale to terrify young babes  
Like devils' faces scor'd on painted posts,  
Or fained circles in our astrolabes  
Why there's no difference when we are dead,  
And death once come, then all alike are sped  
Or if there were, as I can scarce believe,  
A heaven of joy, and hell of endless pain  
Yet by my soul it never should me grieve,  
So I might on the Turkish empire reign,  
To enter hell, and lean on fair heaven's gain  
An empire, *Sinam*, is so sweet a thing,  
As I could be a devil to be a king

(Malone Society reprint, 1908, II 326-436)

Even if Marlowe did not write the play, he may of course have contributed these lines, or are they the work of one of Marlowe's converts (mentioned in the Baines libel), or of some other bold young dramatist addicted to the tenets of Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism? A case has been made for Greene as the author of this play I cannot make the sentiments expressed sound like the Greene of the plays generally or of the penitential pamphlets, yet Greene, according to his own statement, had once said "like the fool in his heart, 'There is no God'" The rationalism of Selimus is consistently maintained Perhaps we have here a strong dramatic conception on some playwright's part<sup>1</sup>

(7) The text of *Lust's Dominion* as it now stands (reprinted in Pickering's edition of *The Works of Christopher Marlowe*, 1826, volume 3), totally disagrees with Marlowe's practice in the use of hellish epithets and occult allusions I do not know of any play which is fuller and more violent in the use of these *Richard III* is conservative by the side of it "Damned" and similar words occur 32 times, "hell" 38 times, "devil" 31 times There is every variety of compound and variation hell-hound, mould of hell, prince and son of hell, hell gates, hell-tortured, hell-begotten, the devil's dam is not omitted, there is mention of monster, fiend, fury, hedge-hog, Lucifer, Pluto's kingdom, and sulphury wrath People avow themselves enticed and bewitched, they threaten to conjure, they speak of magic circles (four times), of magic spells and charms (seven times), of witchcraft The ministers of hell do not appear *in propria persona*, but we do have Oberon and a troop of fairies, who dance most incongruously in a tragic scene The use of this material is so thoroughly consistent that page references are valueless the reader will find one or more allusions on almost every page There are 141 clear cases in

<sup>1</sup> Danchin would seem to consider this speech Marlowe's (*Rev Germ.*, Jan - Feb., 1914, p. 61)

the 109 pages of the tragedy, as printed by Pickering I am inclined to think that this profusion is unparalleled in the Elizabethan drama. It far out-Kyds Kyd, whose *Spanish Tragedy* is by no means deficient in these respects. I agree with Professor Brooke that the tone of the play sounds more like Kyd than any other Elizabethan dramatist. Its inception may owe something to him.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “VICE”**



## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "VICE"

By ROBERT WITHERINGTON

IT is generally recognized that the "parasite" came to the English drama from Latin comedy through the Tudor schoolmasters who modelled their plays on the classic masterpieces they knew so well. This "dynamic" character was, however, not unknown in the earlier English comedy, and doubtless many in the audience which greeted Merygreke's appearance on the school stage recognized a fellow and kindred spirit to the Tityillus of the morality.

The suggestion has been made that the Vice owes his name to the mask (*vis, visage*) which perhaps at one time he wore. Chalmers, cited by Laing in his edition of Sir David Lyndsay's poems, seems to adopt Steevens's explanation: ". . . The *vycis* of Lyndsay's *Satyre* [of the *Three Estates*] were more *knaves* than *fools*. This character was always acted in a *mask*, and probably had its name, saith Steevens, from the old French word *vis*, for which they now use *visage*." On the other hand, Webster's Dictionary derives "the buffoon of old English moralities, often named from some particular vice," from the Latin *vitium*, through the French.

However much of a knave the old Vice was, he had a good deal of the buffoon in his composition, and must inevitably have received such sympathy as we give to the comedian who, to-day, makes us laugh. Yet the audiences who heard the moralities at their height did not sympathize with the Vice to such an extent that they lost their joy in his discomfiture, and the authors of these plays were careful to keep the sympathies of the audience away from the evil characters whose mode of life led to their ruin. With these characters, the Vice

was usually associated, it was often he who led them astray in the first place, and we must not forget that he was a compound of fool and knave. If his buffoonery gave rise to amusement — even to a mild sympathy — his roguery killed it.

But, before the Vice, the Devil of the miracle-play aroused the mirth of the audience. Dr Whitmore has remarked, in *The Supernatural in Tragedy*, that, in the Towneley *Judgment Day*, the scenes in which the devils figure are of a markedly satirical character. "It is to be noted," he continues, "that the satirical element in these scenes does not make them comic in the sense of being intended merely to provoke laughter . . . There is always a serious background behind the satirical touches. Moreover, we must remember that to the mediæval mind, very conscious of the intellectual character of sin as an obscuration of the inner light of thought, there was always a certain misshapenness about sinners and devils, especially the latter, which provoked scornful laughter. The distorted moral nature of the devil results in certain physical malformations of body and speech which are an essential part of his nature. Yet if these characteristics move us to laughter, he has others which are ground for fearing him, and so long as he is seriously regarded he cannot become a purely comic figure. Many traits in the mediæval devils which may appear wholly amusing to us were so only in part to the spectators of the miracle-plays, and we must beware of overlooking this more serious aspect. In the occasional instances — chiefly in Chester and Coventry — where the purely comic handling appears, it is so incidental and so trivial that it can be largely neglected in a summary of the whole field."

The origin of the Vices has been studied in a recent paper by Miss T. E. Allison<sup>x</sup> who suggests that the lost morality, the Paternoster Play, was chiefly concerned with the Seven

<sup>x</sup> "The Paternoster Play and the Origin of the Vices" in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* for December, 1924 (xxxix, 4, pp. 789 ff.)

Deadly Sins The "pageant of Viciōse" in the Beverly Cycle seems to deal with vices which were distinguished from sins — vice (according to patristic theology) being "regarded as a weakness in the nature of man which preceded actual sin, and further, that it was this weakness which provoked man's consent to sin" Miss Allison suggests that perhaps Ramsay's surmise that this "pageant of Viciōse" dealt with the temptation of mankind, and that, Man's resistance being broken, he was made ready prey for the Seven Deadly Sins, is a sound one, though impossible of proof, as we have no list of the characters in the "pageant of Viciōse"

Backbiter, or Detraccio, the messenger of Mundus in *The Castle of Perseverance*, is distinctly a Vice, he introduces himself.

All thyngis I crye a-gayn the pes  
 To knyt and knaue This is my kende  
 Ya! dyngne dukis on her des,  
 In bytter balys I hem bynde,  
 Crynge and care, chydyngē and ches,  
 And sad sorwe, to hem I sende  
 Ya! lowde lesyngis lachyd in les,  
 Of talys vn-trewe is al my mende  
 Mannys bane a-bowtyn I bere,  
 I wyl that ye wetyn, all tho that ben here,  
 For I am knowyn fer and nere,  
 I am the Werldys messengere,  
 My name is Bacbytere

In this holte I hunte here  
 For to spye a preuy pley,  
 For whanne Mankynde is clothyd clere,  
 Thanne schal I techyn hym the wey  
 To the dedly synnys seuene .

Miss Allison points out that he appears with Voluptas, Stultitia, and Veynglory (*Inanis gloria*) early in the play, and that the action of all except Detraccio is completed before the entrance of the Sins "Detraccio, who is the most important of the four, instructs Mankind in the Seven Deadly Sins and serves as the messenger or page of the Evil Powers. . . . In

the *Castell of Perseverance*, then, we find characters bearing the names of the *Vitia*—these characters are sent ahead to win the consent of Mankind to the Seven Deadly Sins, they are predecessors of the Sins and, with the exception of one, they disappear from the action upon the appearance of the *Peccata Capitalia*” It is noteworthy that the one who does not disappear is the most important

Mischief, in *Mankind*, is, like Detraccio, a page, and has three “minor vices” under his control, but the chief Vice here is, I think, rather Titivillus, whose connection with the devil of the miracle-play we shall comment on later. The attendants of Flesh and the Devil in *The Castle of Perseverance* are six of the Deadly Sins, the seventh attending World. Miss Allison’s conclusions are summed up in her final paragraph “Thus from an examination of patristic definitions of vice and sin, it is evident that the distinction between the two was fairly consistent, and that the functions of each were distinct from those of the other. A study of moralities near to the Paternoster Play certainly shows the existence of a group of evil figures other than the Seven Deadly Sins, the function of which corresponded to that of the ecclesiastical *vitia*, namely the temptation of mankind in contrast to the Seven Deadly Sins which usually appear as opponents of the Heavenly Virtues. That these lesser evil figures may have been the source of the comic element seems highly probable because of their nature in the earlier moralities, because of the classes of men to whom the pageant was assigned, and because of its position in the cycle”

The comic character of the Vice is due, I think, to the comedy latent or developed in the devil of the miracle-play, his prototype

Such comedy as may be found in the discomfiture of an unsympathetic figure is mingled with the tragedy involved in a fall from high estate, when God orders Lucifer to hell, in the

Hegge *Fall of Lucifer* Pride has carried Lucifer to the throne of the Deity, and God orders him down.

ffor thi mekyl pryde,  
I bydde the ffalle from hefne to helle,  
And alle tho that holdyn on thi syde,  
In my blysse nevyr more to dwelle  
At my comawndement anoon down thou slyde,  
With merthe and joye nevyr more to melle  
In myschyf and manas evyr xalt thou abyde,  
In byttyr brennyng and fyre so felle,  
In peyn evyr to be pyht

And Lucifer replies.

At thy byddying thi wyl I werke,  
And pas fro joy to peyne smerte  
Now I am a devyl ful derke,  
That was an aungelle bryht  
  
Now to helle the wey I take,  
In endeles peyn ther to be pyht  
For fere of fyre a fart I crake,  
In helle donjoone myn dene is dyth

This is akin to the comedy furnished by the outwitted Herod in the Coventry *Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors*. If Herod is the ancestor of the melodramatic villain, as he has been called, he has also something of the *miles gloriosus* and a good deal of the buffoon in him, and his wild raging was doubtless funny.

owt! owt! owt!  
Hath those fawls traytvs done me this ded?  
I stampe! I stare! I loke all abowtt!  
Myght I them take, I schuld them bren at a glede!  
I rent! I rawe! and now run I wode!  
A! thatt these velen trayturs hath mard this my mode!  
They schalbe hangid yf I ma cum them to!

*Here Erode rages in the pagond and  
in the strete also*

To the comedy of the villain foiled is added the childish behavior of a king who has lost his temper, and both must have provoked the mirth of the spectators who could have no sym-

pathy with the regal rogue To "out-Herod Herod" had become proverbial by the time of Shakespeare

Like Lucifer, and unlike Herod, the Antichrist of the Chester play had a power of which mediæval audiences may have been in fear, but one must admit that the discomfiture of the supernatural figures must have brought as much pleasure (not unmixed with relief) to the spectators, as the outwitting, and subsequent lack of self-control, of the proud king Had Anti-christ been human, there might have been tragedy in his end, for his position resembles that of Tamburlaine or Doctor Faustus There are comic possibilities in the contrast between the pride of Satan and his fall, but if he is less comic than the Herod of the Coventry Corpus Christi play, it is because he is more dignified The two demons who carry off his soul were probably funny, even in their grief for their master; and the Second Demon's

Thowe take hym by the tope & I by the tayle,  
An soryfull song, in faythe, shall he senge,

must have made the journey to hell of this unsympathetic figure amusing

The "dyvel with thunder and fyre" (Belial) who "avaunts himself," as well as the other devil "callyd Mercury" who enters "with a fyeryng, commyng in hast, cryeng and roryng," in the Digby *Conversion of St Paul*, may be considered comic Their grief at the loss of their "specyall frynd," their "chosen Saull," must have made the audience laugh, and yet the people may not have been able to forget the knavery beneath the buffoonery

Fear was surely not one of the emotions with which the contemporary public regarded the Vice of the moralities, but the connection of Tityvillus, in *Mankind*, with the earlier supernatural character is suggested by the stage-direction: "Enter Tityvillus arrayed like a devil and with a net in his hand" One of the devils in the Towneley *Judgment* was named

Tutivillus,— a name which suggests “totally [tutti] vile” In *Mankind*, Mischief is not far from the “parasite”— a worthless companion who leads the thoughtless characters astray, but he is also comic “I am cumme hedyr to make yow game” Tityvillus is, however, the Vice, he “kan lerne yow many praty thynges,” and brings Mankind “to myscheff & to schame” In the explanation of the allegory given by Mercy, “propyrly Titivilly syngnyfieh the fend of helle,” so that the connection between the Vice and the Devil seems established When Tediousness, in *Wit and Science*, “cumth in with a vyser over hys hed,” it is (says Collier) “to make him look like a devil”, and he swears “by Mahowndes bones” in the usual style of the old miracles In the pageants, the devils who with squibs cleared the streets for the processions, were undoubtedly comic figures, but this was long after the period when the public watched devils pitchfork the souls of the damned into the fires of Hell-Mouth Such mirth as these antics may have provoked was mingled with fear, as Dr Whitmore has said, and we cannot regard the devil as an entirely comic figure as long as he was felt to be a power of evil. The case is different with the Vice, whose machinations were frustrated by the virtues in the moralities as inevitably as ever Lucifer or Antichrist was overcome by the power of God

But the Vice was not always wholly knave we find an element of the fool, or rather of the buffoon, in him. This connects him with the classic “witty page” who appeared in the Tudor drama about the same time as the “parasite” Pike-harness, Cain’s boy, in *The Killing of Abel*, acted by the Glovers of Wakefield, is a very early example of this figure in the miracle-play, the scene where he wilfully miscries each line of the proclamation recalls Merygreke’s misreading of Ralph’s letter, and the “tangled chain” of Quince’s prologue In the Digby *Conversion of St Paul*, the Servant and the Stable-boy are comic figures forecasting the Slipper, Nano, and Andrew of

*James the Fourth*, as does Colle, the leech's man, in *The Play of the Sacrament*, a prototype of Miles in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. There is almost as much comedy in the stupid servant as in the witty page, though the humor is less intellectual. Ignorance, in *Wit and Science*, is aptly called "fool", he furnishes some buffoonery, but is more nearly connected with the stupid servant type than with the Vice, an excellent example of the developed Vice is Iniquity, in *The Nice Wanton* he is rather parasite than witty page Sir A W Ward points out that in Bale's *King John*, Sedition is "at once the main agent in the conduct of the play, and its solitary comic character . . . He represents the Vice of the moralities"

Is it Jesuitical to suggest a common element in the "parasite" and the servant, witty or stupid? The latter gets paid for the service he renders, while the former renders service for which he hopes (and usually receives) a reward. The servant does as he is told, or at least is supposed to, the parasite finds not only his employer (if we may call him so) but his employment — and stirs up what trouble he can, in the hope of getting some kind of benefit from it. In other words, the witty page — or the stupid servant — focusses the buffoonery of the Vice, while the parasite shows his roguery

This roguery is not always a serious matter Merygreke, in *Roister Doister*, is not a disagreeable character, and certainly not vicious, although he plays tricks on Ralph Flugel has pointed out that he is "Udall's own creation — a figure in itself deserving of high praise Undoubtedly this character was at first conceived as a mere modern parasite . . . but as the play advanced, the figure outgrew its original limits, and although in the first scenes Merygreke is scarcely out of the egg-shell of the parasite, he proves very soon to be a new character: a character belonging to the class of Pandarus, a 'Friend' playing the part of kindly Fate, a Vice certainly mis-

chievous and cruel enough, but directing everything to a good end, as full of humor and fun as of character, and, at the bottom of his heart, of good-nature" Ralph is an early example of the "*miles gloriosus*" in English—an ancestor of Falstaff, who has also (it must be confessed) an element of the parasite in him If Diccon, in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, is a "dynamic" character who lives, like the parasite, by his wits, he is also (as Ward remarks) "merely the Vice of the old moralities slightly modified" In the same play, Hodge suggests the stupid servant type rather than the Vice, for the buffoonery of devil and Vice was almost never stupid It is rather Diccon than Hodge who is in sight of the Shakespearian "clown"—which, indeed, is the word Saintsbury used to describe him he is "the clown or 'vice' of the piece" Cocke, Gammer Gurton's boy, does not play an important part in the comedy, but may be considered the "raw material" of the witty page Ambidexter, the Vice in *Cambyses*, is cleverly attached to the plot, and if the subject (at all events) attests the influence of classic literature upon the beginnings of English tragedy, as Ward says, the play contains a figure from the earlier drama on which the classical parasite was grafted, as the page — witty or stupid — was grafted on such a figure as Pikeharness

Ambidexter shows clearly the component parts of the Vice, for not only is his participation in the action ingeniously managed, "but," to quote Ward again, "room is also found for much low fun and ribaldry between the Vice and three ruffians, Huf, Snuf, and Ruf, and two 'country patches,' Hob and Lob" In a note Ward calls attention to the resemblance between this scene and that in *The Winter's Tale* between the peasants and Autolycus, "who is a genuine descendant of the Vice." It is interesting to connect this aspect of the Vice with the Fool of the folk-drama, the conversation between Pickle Herring and his father in the Revesby

*Sword Play* combines the wit and stupidity found in page and servant

Pasiphilo, in Gascoigne's *Supposes*, is obviously a parasite in the third scene of the first act, he tells the audience that he has "mo pastures to passe in than one" He is "of housholde with this scholer Erostrato (his riuale), as well as with Domine Cleander. nowe with the one, and then with the other, according as I see their caters prouide good cheere at the market, and I finde the meanes so to handle the matter that I am welcome too bothe If the one see me talke with the other, I make him beleue it is to harken newes in the furtherance of his cause, and thus I become a broker on bothe sides" This is surely ambidextrous! But Dulipo sees through him, and in the first scene of the next act characterizes him as "a very flattering and lying knave" Cleander, in the last act, calls him a "knav and villain," to which Pasiphilo replies. "I know I am a knave, but no villain I am your servant." His final speech is not that of a rogue "Behold the natural love of the child to the father For inward joy he cannot pronounce one word, instead whereof he sendeth sobs and tears to tell the effect of his inward intention. But why do you abide here abroad? Will it please you to go into the house, sir?" And Damon replies: "Pasiphilo hath said well." The parasite seems to repent, he brings good news to Damon at the end, and is readily forgiven for a knavery that is not very deep-seated.

In Edwards's *Damon and Pithias*, the parasite Carisophus is more of a villain "Of parasites and sycophants" he is "a grave bencher", and he himself admits that

Carisophus is he  
Which hath long time fed Dionysius' humour.  
Diligently to please, still at hand, there was never rumour  
Spread in this town of any small thing but I  
Brought it to the king in post by and by

He hunts up strangers.

They were a good prey  
If happily I might meet with them, I fear not, I,  
But in talk I should trip them, and that very finely  
Which thing, I assure you, I do for mine own gain,—  
Or else I would not plod thus up and down, I tell you plain

And again. "For profit I will accuse any man, hap what shall" So the arrest of Damon is planned, the lying charge made, and the friendship of Pithias tested His end is not that of Pasiphilo, for Eubulus the counsellor beats him, upbraids him — "Away, villain! Away, you flattering parasite!" — and he goes, saying,

Yet, Eubulus, though I be gone, hereafter time shall try,  
There shall be found, even in this court, as great flatterers as I  
Well, for a while I will forego the court, though to my great pain  
I doubt not but to spy a time when I may creep in again

The moral is drawn by Eubulus.

The serpent that eats men alive — flattery — with all her brood,  
Is whipp'd away in princes' courts, which yet did never good  
What force, what mighty power true friendship may possess,  
To all the world Dionysius' court now plainly doth express  
Purged is the court of vice since friendship ent'red in

Aristippus, the "pleasant gentleman" who supplanted the parasite at court, may possibly be considered a parasite, too, but he is surely not a villain, though he does not dare risk his position to save the accused Damon. Both Aristippus and Carisophus have "lackeys" who are "witty pages," and, as such, have little effect on the action of the play, but they point the way to the development of this figure in the quarter century to come

Slipper, in *James the Fourth*, is, of course, the "witty page" clearly developed — he is "an excellent clown," as Ward says Several scenes in which Andrew, Slipper, and Nano figure, suggest such earlier scenes as those in *The Conversion of St. Paul* or *The Play of the Sacrament*, to which we have already referred, and Slipper is a development of Pikehar-

ness, through the "witty page." Quite another kind of parasite is Ateukin. Ward calls him "a well-drawn character," but he is clearly a villain. Perhaps all parasites have the potentialities of villainy, as the Vice is as much a rogue as a fool, but there is no suggestion of the buffoon in this sinister person. When Slipper becomes Ateukin's servant, not only is the induction linked with the main plot of Greene's play, but the development of the element of the fool in the Vice, through the "witty page" of the Latin comedy, is joined to the element of the rogue in the Vice, developed by the classic "parasite".<sup>1</sup> When Ateukin is entrusted with the murder of the queen, after suggesting it, he is not far removed from a "base notorious knave."

This quick glance at sample plays will, perhaps, show sufficiently how mirth glided into folly, and folly into sin, for once the devil became a comic figure, he was allied to the comic side of the Vice, which drew also from the Fool of the folk-play and the clever or stupid servant of the miracles. Developed through the "witty page" of Roman comedy, this aspect of the Vice led directly to the "clown" of Elizabethan comedy—the Lancelot Gobbo, the Dogberry and Verges, the Bottom, the Quince, and the Feste of a later theatre. But the Vice was also a "dynamic" character, and somewhat of a rogue, and this quality, developed under the influence of the classic "parasite" into such a figure as Ateukin, points the way to such villains as Don John and Iago, who have lost their parasitic qualities. Comedy stresses the one development, as tragedy stresses the other, obviously a villain cannot be deeply dyed, if we view his rascality lightly. Underneath the *miles gloriosus* in Falstaff's composition, we

<sup>1</sup> After Act II, scene ii, line 151 (cf. Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearian Drama*, ii, page 366), the stage-direction reads "Enter Gnato," and Ateukin comes on. Gnatho was a parasite in Terence's *Eunuchus*, and Greene undoubtedly considered this character as a parasite. The King of Scotland addresses him as "gentle Gnato" (line 207, see Manly, ii, p. 368), cf. also line 138 of the same scene—"these flattering Ghatoes."

can faintly discern traces of the parasite, perhaps a shade more obvious in Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym; but these gentlemen, living by their wits as parasites did, were not attached to any master, and were rather of the kindly sort, as was Merygreke. Was not the Vice often "an aged counsellor to youthful sin"? — or at least a counsellor to sin, and if Prince Hal was not corrupted, it was not the fault of Sir John.

In both comedy and tragedy, the more a character is individualized, the less obvious become the features of the type to which he belongs. When he is so complex that he belongs to no type exclusively, he is almost a living being. // The study of the early English drama brings us few things more interesting or more valuable than the comprehension of the growth of this complexity from the simple types of the morality to the individuals who crowd the stage of Shakespeare.

A figure from a foreign drama cannot become naturalized away from home, unless there is a congenial soil in which the transplanted element can root itself. Both the "witty page" and the "parasite" found this congenial element in the Vice, and is it too fantastic to imagine that Lancelot Gobbo, Falstaff, and Iago can trace their ancestry to the most human figure of the moralities? To err is human — and the erring ones became human on the stage long before the colder and simpler virtues. It is due to his complexity at a time when most figures in the drama were far from complex that we regard the Vice as the most important of the morality-play characters, though the authors of these plays probably did not regard him in this light. Only when we stop to analyze him, can we find out why he is complex. Part servant, part devil; part fool, part rogue, part buffoon, part the source of the chief action of the play, he combined wit and villainy before the Tudor times. And when the schoolmasters brought "witty page" and "parasite" to the English stage, he absorbed them, and when he had outgrown the type, he died.



## IN PRAISE OF CERVANTES



## IN PRAISE OF CERVANTES

By HENRY B. LATHROP

THIS paper is not a contribution to knowledge, or even a novelty in criticism, but an expression of the feelings. It is an attempt to put into words a feeling of reverence and a sense of obligation. And however unskillful or inadequate it may be, it is sincere, and it is the result of long familiarity and devotion. Of *Don Quixote* it is said that the children turn its pages, the young read it, the middle-aged understand it, the old praise it. May I take the liberty to remember a day in my childhood? I was about eight, I was making a frank visit at a friendly home, the kind of visit that begins at somewhat after seven in the morning, and ends when you are discovered tucked away in some corner of the house, and hauled out and sent home.

In a heap of books in the attic was a thick dwarf volume, with a leather cover, rounded corners, yellowed paper with a kind of bloom on its surface, fat type, and curious little old copperplate engravings — a gnome or cobold of a book. It began: "At a certain village in La Mancha, of which I cannot remember the name, there lived not long ago one of those old-fashioned gentlemen, who are never without a lance upon a rack, an old target, a lean horse, and a greyhound." No lunchbell, no dinnerbell sounded that day within my world, I did not feel the eager hunger of childhood. No change in the direction of the shadows was perceived by me as I sprawled on the floor, reading from page to page, and only the darkness which made reading impossible drew me to a realization that I was probably the lost child of anxious parents, one of whom might not find a tale of a voyage of discovery in new worlds.

sufficient to excuse my trespassing on the hospitality of my good friends the Suttons

Certainly I did not in my youth desert the high-minded knight, though I came to know many more of his genial tribe. I do not know whether I understood Cervantes, but I shall not forget the period when some three or four of us, admirers of things of Spain, came together once a week, and each with a different translation in hand, we read aloud the choice and massive, but free Castilian of Cervantes, and discussed the various translations into English, and, like the translators of the authorized version of the Bible, held each in hand an early translation or a commentary, and conned over the text, word by word, and sentence by sentence, from the pigeon pies at the beginning to the priest's blessing at the end. And now I praise Cervantes! *Absit omen!* For I am not so *very* old yet.

There is but one subject really possible for me, and that is the impress upon English literature of Cervantes's genius for the definition of that debt is my best confession of gratitude to Cervantes for being and doing what he has done.

The facts of Cervantes's influence in English literature are matters of common knowledge. One cannot say that his story became a household word in England before it did in Spain, but it was at once familiar and respected in England, while a large part of the Spanish public regarded its interest as illicit and somewhat shameful — it was read, but under the rose, as an improper book, from ill-printed pages, and subject to ecclesiastical censure and the disapproval of professional critics. In England, on the contrary, *Don Quixote* became promptly classic — it is one of the very few books not in Latin or Greek having the honor to be cited in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, for example.

The eighteenth century in England developed two conspicuous types of realistic prose fiction — the objectively

panoramic, and the introspectively tragic. In the one there are many characters, much incident, many changes of place, a predominantly comic tone. The other is characterized by the small number of characters, intensity of passion, a definite transaction with few changes of place, a predominantly tragic tone. Of the latter sort Richardson is the great example, and the history of the novel carries on the tradition in George Eliot, and the later English novel in Hardy and Meredith, and, in a sense, in Mrs Wharton. The other novel is the novel of Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, and of Scott, on the whole, and of Dickens and Thackeray, absolutely. I do not know that any writer carries on this tradition.

We know by evidence both external and internal that Cervantes shares with Le Sage the place of model and inspirer to the genial and objective as distinguished from the grave and introspective novel.

It is first to be remarked that the form and in some sense the spirit of *Don Quixote* is in a great measure determined by the fact that Cervantes is writing a parody of a romance of chivalry, a parody more chivalrous in spirit than much of the fiction he ridiculed, and hence *Don Quixote* must present life as a spectacle on a great scale, with a multitude of figures, a copious variety of incident, and ample and highly colored impression of active energy, a profusion which may be indistinct but never thin, poor, or monotonous. *Don Quixote* is and must be a big book. Indeed, the author, having at his command the inexhaustible riches of nature's energy in place of the limited store of romantic convention—the never-ending, ever-shifting variety of the actual detail of life in place of

Races and Games,  
Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,  
Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds,  
Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights  
At Joust and Tournament, then Marshall's Feast  
Served up in Hall with Sewers and Seneschals —

is more profuse than his models. He has not only dame and damsels, knight and squire, with a few wizards and Paynims to fill the canvas, but all sorts and conditions of men as one sees them on the road — Master Nicholas, the blundering barber, the witty and clear-sighted Samson Carrasco, the vaguely dreadful holy brotherhood, the inexhaustible tribe of inn-keepers, and inn functionaries, from Juan Palomeque, the cross-grained left-handed curmudgeon, and the fat and pacific hypocrite who knighted Don Quixote, down to the flat-faced Maritornes, the muleteers, ready with their clubs, ungrateful galley-slaves, sententious runaway daughters, a youthful soldier trolling a careless chanson, and lighting the gray landscape of La Mancha with a spot of color, a plowman at dawn with a ballad of battles long ago, the kindly inadequate curate, the pert niece, and the squinting rogues of the Seville beggars' fraternity.

The book was not quickly completed, ten years elapsed after the first part appeared before the riper, richer-minded, and nobler, though no more splendidly inspired, second part was published. *Don Quixote* is the first great modern work of prose fiction into which a choice master spirit poured his whole life-blood. Cervantes himself could never have made another comic epic of reality. Another thing he might have done, but never again this thing or anything like it, never even a sister work to this epitome of a life.

So our elder novel was boldly big. not for it the unmanly saying of the Alexandrian librarian Callimachus, "A big book is as bad as the big devil himself." No. They knew that the ample spirit of real life cannot be boxed into a petty compass. No! For Fielding (or, indeed, for Richardson) there was the possibility of creating one vast book, — the vehicle of the whole vision of the tremendous and diverting panorama of human society, — the experience of an entire life spent in active contact with the real movement of men and things, not to be

made by any but a mature and seasoned man, and by him to be done just once, though it might be prepared for by less satisfactory experiments, or echoed by weaker successors. Thus Clarissa Harlowe and Tom Jones turned out, prepared for by Pamela and Joseph Andrews, and succeeded not unhappily by Grandison and Amelia, but in themselves unique, unrepeatable, unapproachable, the vast repository of the imaginative experience — the inner life and the outer vision of two great observers. Even Sterne has his one supreme work of realistic experience, even Smollett does his quintessential and unique best but once.

It was reserved for Scott to shorten the novel, to make a trade of producing stories, to fill a library shelf with novels, and to show the way to others, to create a profession for Bulwer and Dumas, Sr., G P R James and Harrison Ainsworth, and, I suppose, in a way, for Dickens and Trollope.

Most of our later theorists contest the legitimacy of this vast repository type of fiction. I remember that Mr Lewisohn once declared without limitation or allowance that a novel must have a single theme, resulting in an absolutely single transaction, without digression into unnecessary characters or incidents, without unnecessary words. He made me think the true fiction writer to be a clean, lean, fleet, eager hound intent upon the prey before him.

But all forms are good that are good that express a sincere nature adequately. But the most notable of realistic geniuses, Zola, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, have not hesitated to create books on a vast scale and with a leisurely progress, with an eye not only for the end of the road, but for the things to be seen along the way, and their power is certainly one of momentum, of massive weight inseparable from sheer bigness, of fulness of observation on life, not to be achieved without leisurely abundance of matter.

Even with the great writers of the Regency and the earlier

Victorian era, with Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, though writers of novels — not of one supreme novel — the example of the large and leisurely method, the genial fecundity of the Spanish master is a fixed tradition, and though they wrote shorter books and more of them, they wrote longer and more leisurely books than the narrow and supercilious criticism of a more recent time demands of its fiction writers.

Recently, again, the English novel dares to be pretty big, though in a new way: Bennett's trilogy, Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, and Wells's best novels are not lyric or dramatic, but have the right qualities of the fine epic, amplitude and leisure. They are big, however, not so much with incident, as with setting, not so much ample in invention, as in atmosphere.

Secondly, like its models and brethren, the romances, *Don Quixote* is a disorderly book, loose-textured, full of incident, but without plot. The Don, like Amadis, sets forth on adventures, and achieves them; but, as it would have affected the story of Amadis little to have had more or fewer giants or dungeons, or savage men, or coynesses of Oriana, so there is almost no one incident necessary to the development of *Don Quixote*, and almost no point where another delusion of the Don's, or a new figure crossing the horizon, or a new proverb of Sancho's might not be in place. The truth is, the unity of *Don Quixote* is not of design, not of cunning pattern or proportion, but of the spirit. It is the imprint of Cervantes, the peculiar tone of the work, that makes every incident, almost every turn of phrase, in harmony with that living unity of which it is a part, and not viable anywhere else. Now this evolution of unity from within and consistency with itself I maintain is a true unity; a fourth unity deeper than those of time, place, and action. This last — this supposedly necessary principle — is quite inapplicable to this type of work, as it is somewhat unfriendly to cheerful comedy always.

This looseness of texture and unity of spirit, the best English novels not of the tragic type share with their exemplar. The plot of *Tom Jones*, so highly praised by Coleridge, is purely linear — Tom is pushed down or up by forces on the opposite side of his line of adventure. We might have more adventures or fewer, and the rule be uninjured — the systematic shaping of the story, Jones's flight, Sophia's following, the apparent dashing of Tom's fortunes, and the final happy settlement are quite external to the real interest. Just so, the Don's adventures look forward to an end with the healing of his madness, after which the only art to ease his melancholy and wring our bosoms is to die. Of the Victorian novel, Thomas Seccombe, in the article on English Literature in the Encyclopædia Britannica says, quite frankly: "Intellectually giants, Dickens and Thackeray were equally gigantic spend-thrifts. They worked in a state of fervent heat above a glowing furnace, into which they flung lavish masses of unshaped metal, caring little for immediate effect or minute dexterity of stroke, but knowing full well that the emotional energy of their temperaments was capable of fusing the most intractable material, and that in the end they would produce their great downright effect."

This quality I assert to be a quality, a characteristic feature of a type, not an essential fault. It is in Scott the vivacity of the things done,

The sense of the fate of nations,  
And the romantic impressions,

that creates the true unity, not the career of his insipid hero. It is Dickens's panorama, his tone, that gives the unity. This emotional and if we may so call it aesthetic and impressionist unity is a feature of English literature, as it seems to me, as distinguished from the intellectual unity of pattern demanded in general in French literature. In fiction *Don Quixote* seems to me to have contributed to it profoundly.

Of these elements of the early novel, it is of course true that the example of *Gil Blas* as of *Don Quixote* would both likewise encourage them; and to attempt to separate the two streams of fiction absolutely would be a solecism in criticism. As for the external scheme, the plan or receipt by which these novels were written, a certain distinction may easily be noted. In a general way all the narratives cover the whole life of a young man (occasionally of a young woman) from birth or even before, through the experiences of youth, and in particular through an adventurous contact with the world, to settled manhood. They are all Odysseys of youth. This is Le Sage's contribution. In addition, normally the hero has a companion or attendant, whose relation with him is one of the sources of humor and one of the means of forwarding the plot. Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews; Jones and Partridge; Roderick Random and Strap, Trunnion, Hatchway and Pipes; Uncle Toby and Trim; and indeed Walter and Toby themselves; Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller; Nicholas Nickleby and Smike are examples. Scott and Thackeray, though they have more in some novels of the spirit of Cervantes than Smollett or Dickens, do not make much of this relation.

This relation is Cervantes's contribution to the scheme or type of fable. But that spiritual unity, that permeating uniqueness of quality belongs to *him*, not to Lesage. *Gil Blas* is not unique, but a type capable of reproduction, the amassing of all the best of a large group of novels; and the incidents and features of his story are transferable—the cells and structures of his organism are viable in other media, he has not the unity of an energizing life. So the lower inspiration of Smollett derives from him, as the higher gift of Fielding, and Sterne, as of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, looks back to Cervantes.

But it is of course the spirit of Cervantes's humor that is the most potent force from Spain in English fiction. The

process, by the way, was one of those with reference to which the age was quite conscious. The tantalizingly attractive theme of the nature of the comic was one of the favorite subjects of discussion by the critical theorists of the day; and in general all the chief imaginative writers were more clearly aware of their own literary aims than is customary in English literature. The subject of the comic and laughter comes up constantly and in really unexpected places. Dr. Campbell's *Rhetoric* begins, after a few introductory definitions, with an analysis of the cause of laughter, as a fundamental part of the discussion of means of persuasive effort in oratory, and the subject receives more ample treatment than any other topic of the book except good usage. Echard in his *Grounds for the Contempt of the Clergy* deals at length with the humor of the pulpit, as a means of supporting the regard of the public for the clergyman as not altogether remote from the world, at the same time as a danger to his dignity. And these authors, as even those on the side of the ancients in the famous controversy, maintain that in the one point of humor modern times have surpassed the classic masters.

Thus Campbell declares, "In all antiquity, Lucian himself not excepted, one cannot find a match for Swift and Cervantes. There is, perhaps, no book in any language wherein the humorous is carried to a higher pitch of perfection than in the adventures of the celebrated knight of La Mancha." Cervantes especially is the object of praise and respect. Echard holds him up as the great model and example. I regret that I cannot lay my hand on a copy, so that I cannot transcribe his words. Fielding avows himself his pupil, and systematically discusses hypocrisy as an object of ridicule; Smollett refers to his satire in his prefaces; Sterne boldly adopts his most profound, humorous situations; and, of course, these authors, as well as Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, directly strive to create one or more figures of the quixotic type.

The humor of Cervantes is not to be defined in one word, for it is very various. Cervantes had a cheerful temperament as well as an intellect that held aloof from its object in the most analytic penetration; and he found amusement in farce and horseplay, in satire and irony, as well as in sympathetic and psychological humor. There is some sheer fun in the beatings and tossings in the blanket; there is the most pregnant of ironical comments on sentimentalism in the incidents of Andrés and the galley slaver.

Andrés, you remember, was delivered by the prowess of the knight from the abuse of his cruel master, who, when the knight had gone out of sight, tied the boy up again, and took double out of his hide. The galley slaves, upon being let loose, soon stoned their benefactor; one robbed him afterwards delicately, and the insane, murderous, and thievish rabble, delivered from the offensive chains of the law, scattered over the face of the earth to do harm to peaceful folk.

There is a cool irony in the references to Avellaneda; but there is above all the tenderest sympathy combined with the most lucid of criticism in the mere conception of the characters of the Knight and the Squire. So various is the humor, including dry, intellectual comment, sheer joviality, and the pathetic comedy of disillusioned romance, that no formula will well cover or exhaust its character.

But this may be remarked. As Watts-Dunton well says in his comments on the humor of *Don Quixote*, in the *Athenaeum*, Cervantes is not, like Rabelais, a cosmic humorist. He does not see the essential relations of man and nature as in themselves comic: he has not anything like Kipling's

Made thee a gleesome, fleasome thou,  
And me a wretched me.

He has not even any such pregnant humor as Sterne, in which the relations of brotherhood or of marriage are in themselves comic. Man is not comic to him; it is the deviations of men,

easy but not inevitable, from a right balance of nature that are comic, the excess of imagination in the man of thought, or the excess of literalism in the practical man of vulgar prudential sense.

Now it may be contended that this is a better humor than Rabelais's; that the humor which keeps the soul apart from nature, in a way above it, that ridicules the absurd in man, and not man as an absurdity, is a healthy humor and indeed the best humor; that cosmic humor lames the soul, and that Rabelaisian humor at its best is not cosmic but human, and then is tonic and fortifying.

There is nothing in Rabelais better than the ridicule of war, or the ridicule of scholastic education; there is something monstrous in the ridicule of life as such, or the ridicule of all education as such.

But if Cervantes does not press the sense of the ridiculous to its utmost possible limit, dissatisfied until he has made it an absolute philosophy, yet he is still further from making it conventional; from turning his humor on mere deviations from an accepted ideal, as do the authors of English Restoration Comedy, for example, for whom there is a code of humor in the social usages of their group — the husband and the tradesman being *ipso facto* ridiculous. His point of view is human and central; not parochial or partisan or limited. Some of his countrymen, unable to reach through their own limitations of sympathy, have been irritated by this breadth, and complain of Cervantes for attacking his own country's tendencies, or for at least holding its weaknesses up to ridicule. There has been some real *españolismo* in the charge, which is at bottom an honor to the humorist. Cervantes was a faithful Catholic and a loyal Spaniard; but he was indeed an enemy of obscurantism, of gloom, of hypocrisy, and of fine, inflated speech, and hence no lover of Philip II. As well charge Mark Twain with being altogether un-American for his mor-

dant satire on popular Calvinism, or for his occasional ridicule of American brashness.

This humor of Cervantes, then, is critical, keen, revealing of rascality, as of irrationality and excess, whether of grossness, or dulness, or of undue exaltation. But its spirit is characteristic again as to its temper. He had imitators and admirers in England in plenty: Swift and the earlier Samuel Butler, for instance; but the temper of Cervantes is not scornful like Swift's, or contemptuously partisan like Butler's. He loved his most contemptible figures. As is said: "There is something Christian in them all." Sancho is devoted and kindly tempered. The Don is a noble gentleman. Aldonza Lorenzo, the strapping lass, who can pitch a bar like a young fellow, is witty, too, decent, and in her way not without a rustic charm of homeliness.

Addison presents us with an undeniably ridiculous figure like the Don's, in Sir Roger; and Pope admired and studied Cervantes's humor. They, too, were both benevolent, and had a good will toward mankind, but they are superior persons. They teach us; they have the uplift spirit:

A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring;

or even:

Never elated when one man's oppressed;  
Never dejected while another's blest;

kindly speeches, but handed out.

Addison, too, in all his *fair-sexing*, is not far from contemptuous; he is at least very donnish; even as to his Roger, his smile, if not without a certain curl of the lip, has a lifting of the brow. The benevolently didactic humor of these two men is not that of Cervantes.

Cervantes smiles or laughs at his personages, but as one subject, if not to their weaknesses, to others as great or greater. The defeat of the Don is his own disillusion; he has in him-

self his share of Sancho's stupidity. He loves them in spite of the weakness; to some degree the more for the weakness. Observe this most triumphant and poignant touch of irony. It is only when the madness of the imaginative man is healed that the man of material prudence gets the better of him.

Now it is this spirit — this spirit of affectionate, indeed, of pathetic humor — that is proverbially English; it does not originate with Cervantes. It is the humor of Chaucer and of Shakespeare. But it takes the form of Don Quixote and of Sancho; it was embodied in the figure of the Don and the Squire. It was consciously and imitatively essayed by Addison to the utmost of his power in his Roger and Will Wimble; by Fielding in Parson Adams, and by Goldsmith in *The Vicar of Wakefield*; by Smollett in Bowling and Trunnion; by Sterne in Uncle Toby; by Scott in the Baron of Bradwardine and the Antiquary; by Thackeray in Colonel Newcome; by Dickens on principle in a hundred figures, from Pickwick to Boffin, all alike in spirit and different in individual quality.

I cite these names merely to establish anew the known fact that these writers are definite, conscious imitators of Cervantes. For the real significance of his humor is not in these grotesque but amiable beings, but in a comic spirit, pervasive, like light. It is a tolerant temper, a recognition at once keenly critical of human imperfection, even of sin, or of crime, and of human aspiration and dignity; of the right to be unlike; a combination of enthusiasm and moderation, that affects not only literature but manners and the spirit, and is one of the best aspects of the best part of modern English life, and one source of its practical strength; of its rubbery toughness, and capacity to get on, without everybody in a crowded country getting on everybody else's nerves.

There is another point of view from which the work of Cervantes and his influence in English literature might be treated, but about which I am not sure that I can write

with clearness and precision. *Don Quixote* is full of blood; it has a gust; it has a zest. I do not at all mean that it is optimistic; it certainly does not look at all things and call them good. Ginés de Pasamonte, and Juan de Palomeque, and a good many other people are with clear vision known to be rascals. The whole book has a profound stratum of melancholy. The Knight's chivalrous nobility is a delusion, and the successful of this world are on the whole those least disturbed with vision and insight; the world is an unweeded garden. To this Cervantes is not cynically indifferent. But good and bad are looked on with something more than curious interest. The book is full of, —

Ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine.

Compare Cervantes with Byron, a bitterly disappointed man, who never lost his illusions; Cervantes has been often disenchanted, he has grieved and suffered much; but he is not a disappointed man. On the contrary, his observation at seventy years is fresher, more alert, more interested, than at thirty. The sketch of his admirer whose ruff he rumpled with his affectionate embrace, and who warned the old gentleman that he had the dropsy and might eat but should beware of drinking, is more vivid, more alert, than anything in *Galatea*, for example. Only a man who had been taught by the heavenly powers, stripping away one possession, one external gift after another, and leaving the man naked (not to laughter, for he had his own) when the cold winds came, could see, feel, and write like this.

His roofless corner of the world glows with his own warmth, echoes with his own laughter. Some men turn mystics, as they are stripped of their ideals; he turned his eyes from himself upon the world about him. When Fielding was twenty-one, he tried to write a play called *Don Quixote in England*, but desisted for the time, finding his years and experience insuffi-

cient to provide him with the necessary material for varying the incidents. It was not until he was thirty-five that he published *Joseph Andrews*, which is still an apprentice's work; and not until he was over forty did he at last gain the knowledge of life, the insight into the evil as well as the good, and the humorous and sympathetic curiosity of middle age. Scott's most valuable part, his real Scotch types, succeeded his poetry and romance, could not be done until he was near the grand climacteric. Thackeray had no real success, and deserved none, until he was in middle life. Dickens's extravagance was marvellously precocious; but he alone of our realistic novelists achieved a distinguished success early.

Now to know life as the experienced man does, and to watch it with zest and delight — to have the genial quality of Fielding and Scott, even of Thackeray — contrast that with Samuel Butler's or Gissing's weariness and twitching nerves, Hardy's gloom, Meredith's asperity; our earlier men somehow caught the tone of Cervantes; and they caught it, I think, in their zest for the things seen and done. There is more moral kinship in this spirit with Stevenson's irrepressible, romantic boydom and Kipling's glee in color and movement than with Mr. Galsworthy's austere kind criticism or Mr. Bennett's drabness. I do not know about Mr. Wells. He has a tone or touch of the unwearied nerve of the older day. But he only forgets to be uncomfortable because his attention is caught a moment. On principle and as a system he too says most of the time:

The fools awake to laugh and play;  
The wise awake to mourn.

These writers, too, have their quality — their excellent and special melancholy, composed of many simples. Carry any point of view out far enough and it becomes tremendous; and out of this sensitiveness, we may make a new type: the colossal mood of pity. Whatever riches in the English novel we

may already have or are to receive, I am grateful that the sunny spirit of Cervantes lives far into the mid-Victorian age.

Since the time of Thackeray, the English novel has moved further and further from Cervantes. Cervantes is the spirit of the novel so far as the novel is humorous, and therefore rational, and objective. The novel of tragedy, of analysis, of mere romantic doing, is not in the spirit of Cervantes. A spacious atmosphere, a wide-extended scene, clear sunlight, and healthy activity — not half-lights, the microscope, the inner life, and the demands of the individual — are what the older, the epic novel had its life in.

To the unreflecting mind it appears that its judgments of right and wrong, its sense of beauty, in particular its taste and sentiment as to the relationships between human beings in the world, are peculiarly its own. But of course this is not true. Our language is being made by the elaboration of what our forefathers inherited and elaborated. So are our material conveniences. Likewise our taste and sentiment in the most delicate parts of life are brought into form by generation after generation — our city of Camelot

never built at all  
And therefore built for ever.

An aboriginal inventor discovers a handle, and the rest of the world gets the idea and the thing. An idealist promulgates the idea of monogamous marriage, and makes a new interest in life possible, with some millions of incidental comedies and tragedies. A painter or a poet sees a new beauty of scene or human form; and the rest of the world sees after him, learning from "Luini or Sir Joshua."

To be amused rightly is the fruit of a very old and thorough civilizing process, and a good many geniuses have contributed to the possibility of it. It has taken a long time and some sacrifice to unlearn laughter at a dwarf or a hunchback, and savor the comedy of life — of the shining vanities and flaming

ambitions of youth settling into contented baldness and the measuring of tape. The view of life may lead to the perception of its tragic sense or to a despair deeper than tragedy. Swift despises, Montaigne botanizes, Pascal is lamed. Cervantes sees clearly and laughs and loves. This compound of feelings, clear-sighted, unsentimental, and unsoured, is Cervantes's contribution to civilization. Before Cervantes there were satires, comedies, farces, buffooneries; *contes*, fables, *nouvelles*, apologetics. He made the novel possible. This is not the greatest form of imaginative literature, but it is the most moral and philosophical, it has the most to do with making normal life intelligible and livable. Its gospel provides a better equipment to meet the bitterness of this hard life than Goethe's wisdom, or Byron's force, or Wordsworth's "power to put it by."



## **HERALDS OF ORIGINAL GENIUS**



## HERALDS OF ORIGINAL GENIUS

By PAUL KAUFMAN

With regard to the moral world, conscience — with regard to the intellectual world, genius — is that god within. Genius can set us right in composition without the rules of the learned, as conscience sets us right in life without the laws of the land. — EDWARD YOUNG.

Obey the Genius then most when his impulse is wildest. — EMERSON.

IN 1797, at the commencement exercises of Harvard College, “An Oration upon Genius,” pronounced by Joseph Perkins, fervidly described the beneficent effect of political liberty upon the development of native endowments. Inspired by a “theme so truly noble” if not “entirely novel,” the speaker declared with patriotic pride that under the conditions of such “singular felicity, which separate the United States from the rest of the world, surely genius must be an exotic too delicate for our climate . . . or it cannot but flourish in a soil like ours.” For the first time in history, he affirmed, “in a country ‘where all men are born free and equal’ — emancipated from the chains of despotism, the eagle genius is at full liberty to expand her vigorous wings . . . to build her nest among the stars.” And he glowingly prophesied “the not far distant era, when the United States of America, the asylum of liberty . . . shall become the nursery of *Genius*, the seat of the Muses, the Athens of the age, and the admiration of the world.” The expression of such ardent conviction was, by virtue of its date, more novel than its spokesman apparently realized, for it was an early, if not the first, American description of genius as the natural consequence of political freedom. Before the close of the century which conceived and established the foundations of the modern belief in human liberty, this

Harvard orator asserted the intimate relation between the freedom of the individual and the free expression of genius.

Forty years later, in 1837, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard College, another orator revealed a vision of "The American Scholar" in particular and the supremacy of the individual self in general, such as the earlier speaker and his audience could scarcely have conceived. For in that address — a new spiritual declaration of independence, both for America and every man — Emerson exalted "everything which tends to insulate the individual . . . so that each man shall feel the world as his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state." When each man, he declared, finds the world of truth in "his own bosom alone" and utters that truth ". . . in this action he is a genius"; and this is not the "privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man." Into such terms did Emerson translate for America the pervading belief in the rights of the individual which, since the earlier Harvard oration, had more completely established the new modern régime both in the thought and in the forms of European society.

In the four decades which intervened, romanticism had triumphed in the old world; the doctrine of the freedom of the individual had been enthroned in every sphere of human interest. In the four preceding decades, from 1757 to 1797, the period of the first actual realization of the doctrine in political revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic, the various ideas which combine to achieve the liberation of the individual were for the first time formulated in full, systematic, and compelling form. Among these one of the most important not only for a new theory of creative freedom in the arts, but also for the whole new view of the rights and possibilities of human nature, was the conception of original genius.

Familiar as we may be with these main facts we have not possessed the evidence to show the nature and the influence of

this conception. So absorbed in the expressions, the processes, and the nature of genius has been our interest that we have given scant attention to the question, What have succeeding generations conceived genius to be? And what has been the influence of their conceptions of its nature?

We have tacitly assumed for the most part that the eighteenth-century English conception of genius and inspiration had come down as a traditional inheritance for over two thousand years, that neo-classicism merely subordinated and conventionalized these ideas, and that the second half of the century restored their original force and accorded to them a more dominant rôle. But perhaps we have unconsciously endowed these traditional conceptions with more recently formulated elements which we have read into them. Our only appeal is to the evidence revealed by the history of the conception. We must ask, therefore, What were the origins and nature of this conception? How did it incorporate emerging convictions of the supremacy of individual imagination and emotion over reason and taste, the rights of free original expression over the authority of traditional models and standards? And how, in turn, did it radiate effective ideas of the natural rights of the individual self and so lend its force to the individualistic tendencies which have since triumphed?

## I

Whatever light may here be cast upon the development of the idea of genius, we know at the outset that England shared the common European inheritance of the word itself, with its specific meanings, as transmitted without change from classical antiquity. From the Roman "Genius," the innate essential self of the individual, evolved out of the vague figure of the Greek *dæmon*, an inner voice or guardian spirit, and concretely personified as one's controlling or protecting spirit, sprang the meanings which persist obviously to the present

day. Although the term by natural extension sometimes denoted, without personification, native propensity, intelligence, or ability, the idea of native endowments of the mind, of talent, or even of exceptional intellectual power, was conveyed rather by the different form of the same root word, *ingenium*. This expression, which has been commonly translated genius, may possibly have signified to the Romans at times the supreme creative gift, but the best English equivalent is talent: the distinction between the two is not apparent in Latin. Those qualities with which we invest genius, the mysteriously original, spontaneous, phenomenal power of creation which seems the most superhuman faculty of man, were comprehended in neither the *Genius* nor the *ingenium* of the Romans. The existence of these qualities, however, is definitely recognized by the separate and distinct theory of inspiration or "divine madness," first formulated for European thought by Plato, echoed by Aristotle and Longinus, and transmitted as a traditional belief through the more conventionalized doctrine of the Latin *furor poeticus*. Occasionally Latin thinkers combine the two supplementary ideas, as when Seneca says, "nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fuit," and when Cicero asserts that there is "nemo vir magnus sine aliquo divino afflato." But they remain distinct and are never fused into a single supreme and independent creative faculty. *Ingenium* is rational, intellectual; *furor poeticus* is mysterious, irrational, emotional, irresponsible. The native human ability is conceived as functioning creatively within the limits of established modes and forms, while originality or individual expression springs from some mysterious divine source. But however "divine," the irrational and spontaneous must function also within the limits of these laws and forms. Even the inspired *ingenium* is not lord but steward of the rules of creation.

Essentially unaltered, these formulations carry down

through more than two thousand years the parallel conceptions of intellectual ability and of inspiration. Through the middle ages, according to prevailing dogma at least, individual "genius" is submerged in a strictly ordered institutionalism controlling both the inner and the outer life. The artist did actually create many new original works because the creative spirit can never be wholly suppressed, but in theory he was only a scribe or a skilful adapter, not an inventor. Chaucer and Dante did not know that they were original geniuses because the idea was impossible to them. In the dawn of the Renaissance Petrarch's assertion of the *quiddam suum ac proprium* seems to be a unique harbinger of our modern recognition of individual peculiarity and the validity of its expressions. But, rather strangely, the Renaissance, while achieving a momentous liberation of individual thought and creative imagination, appears never to have distinguished between genius in our sense and mere learning and acquired technical skill. The literary law-giver Vida concluded, amid all his professions of admiration for invention and elaborate descriptions of the process of inspiration, that the highest originality was the most ingenious imitation of the ancients. As representative of those less conventional spirits who were groping for our modern conception, DuBellay speaks of "ceste energie et je ne sçay quel esprit . . . que les Latins appelleroient Genius," but such interesting attempts are rare.

In Renaissance England genius retains its original meaning of controlling spirit, in a literal or figurative sense, and of distinguishing characteristic. A standard collection of twenty-five Elizabethan critical essays contains only two occurrences of the word which would imply any further content. Sidney says, "A poet no industrie can make, if his own genius be not carried into it"—a use which might convey the idea of peculiar mental power. And Chapman attacks Scaliger with the words, "thou . . . never . . . writest anything of thine

owne impotent brain (which I may swear was the absolute inspiration of thine owne ridiculous genius)" — an interesting, though perhaps only remote anticipation of the eighteenth-century notion that genius could be the capricious, even freakish faculty in an individual. To express high intellectual power the Elizabethans employed *ingenium*, or their usual translation, wit. Four times in his critical cento, the "Discoveries," does Ben Jonson grapple with a definition of the Latin word, revealing in the most important one the farthest limits of the ideas of his age. "A goodness of natural wit," he avers, a poet must possess; he must "be able by nature and by instinct to pour out the treasure of his mind." The combination of all the essentials to genuine creative achievement is most perfectly described, however, by Spenser when he relates the various elements in the process thus: "Poetry is a divine instinct and unnatural rage, passing the reach of common reason . . . not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a certain enthusiasmos and celestial inspiration." Into this engaging statement he has "poured all the wit" of his age about genius.

The seventeenth century turns noticeably away from the Elizabethan emphasis upon inspiration, and critics begin to centre their attention upon the nature of what James VI called "your own engine of invention." Together with a marked increase in the use of the term genius, comes the perceptible development of its modern sense of exceptional native gifts. The word begins to assume the largest meaning of wit and gradually to supplant this term, absorbing *ingenium* in the process. By the end of the century it has come to absorb also the traditional elements of *furor poeticus*: when Robert Wolsey declares "true genius . . . a spirit that blows where it lists," and Temple distinguishes between "high flights of wit" and "the pure native force or spirit of genius," we find the evidence that the two parallel conceptions of unusual in-

born talent and of mysterious, spontaneous influence from without have at last been fused into the idea of an extraordinary creative faculty. The age-long theory of inspiration persists as it does to this day in conventional phrase, but having as it were descended to earth and lifted genius to a higher human level by the force of its divine sanctions, it loses its own independent power. Genius, in turn, as indicated in the two descriptions just quoted, begins for the first time, I believe, to signify more than talent. Still it is difficult to determine with assurance whether the distinction is really made in the thought of the time, since no discussion of such an important difference has come down to us. When Dryden uses the unusual phrase "transcendent Genius," it is probable that he means "transcendent talent" and that his expression voices our idea of "real Genius." But he and his contemporaries could not have made Lowell's familiar contrast: "Talent is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is."

## II

Up to this time the history of these conceptions is common to the thought of Western Europe. From now on, however, certain peculiarly English ideas, a recently developed recognition of the marked congenital differences among individuals and the related development of the theory of the humours, conspire to introduce into the conception of genius elements which have since determined its nature. In the famous passage echoed innumerable times in the following century, Temple observes that "The English have more humour [than other peoples] because every man follows his own and takes a pleasure, perhaps a pride to show it . . . [thus] we come to have more originals." And that there is some relation, though not specifically expressed, between "humour," "originals," and genius Temple shows by his remark in the same discussion that he has not "observed among any peoples"

so much true genius as among the English. In this recognition of the idea of originals thus emerges precisely the element and the very word which the eighteenth century was to adopt and elevate to the new modern level of *original* genius. More basic in influence, however, is the pervading theory of the humours which at the same time was developing into more modern meanings and shaping itself as a psychological description of temperament. From a large mass of comment the outline can be seen of three characteristics of the humours: innate individual peculiarity, instinctive or emotional quality, and difficulty or impossibility of control. Here are all the essentials for glorification of individual temperament which was a fundamental impulse of the romantic movement and which has since dominated our whole conception of human nature and particularly its rights of expression. If the history of individualism ever comes to be written, the account of this growth of the idea of humours will prove one of the most fascinating and important chapters.

Our concern here is the discovery of the immediate influence upon the idea of genius and the nature of its contribution in this final stage of our survey. Through the first half of the eighteenth century we find humour and genius definitely related for the first time. No. 144 of "The Guardian" (1713) remarks significantly, "There is scarce an Englishman of any life and spirit that has not some odd cast of thought, some original humour that distinguishes him from his neighbor. It is to this great freedom of temper and this unconstrained manner of living, that we owe in great measure the number of shining geniuses which rise up amongst us from time to time." In the same year a writer in "The Lay Monastery" offers the view that "A great and admirable genius will be allow'd to result from some curious structure of the brain . . . from the different dispositions of the humours." Not a few other passages attest the recognition of this influence. But still

more powerful is the quickening effect of a new conception formulated just before the opening of the century. A definite relationship discloses itself in the suggestive couplet of the Earl of Roscommon's "Essay on Translated Verse" of 1684:

Examine how your humour is inclin'd,  
And which the ruling passion of your mind.

Here is the formula taken over bodily from the French "*passion dominante*" and needed to express the expanding vitality of the theory of the humours. This phrase "ruling passion" comprehends the three characteristics of the humours — innate individuality, instinctive or emotional quality, and difficulty or impossibility of control, and focuses the imperious and even fatalistic nature of individual temperament. The best-known and most influential descriptions are in Pope's lines:

. . . one master-passion in the breast,  
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

. . . . .  
Each vital humor, which should feed the whole,  
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul.

. . . . .  
Nature its mother, habit is its nurse;  
Wit, spirit, faculties but make it worse;  
Reason itself but gives it edge and power.

Elaborated with such startling and unsuspected implications in other well-known passages in Pope and echoed as accepted belief by many prominent eighteenth-century writers, this new theory of the ruling passion becomes a powerful instrument of thought in vitalizing and probably hastening the final formulation of original genius. Reinforced by the idea of originality it leavens the existing conception of genius as exceptional talent with the new emphasis on a fatalistic, temperamental independence of each individual.

During this final stage of the evolution of the humours and ruling passion in the closing years of the seventeenth and the

first half of the eighteenth century, the mere frequency of reference to genius must impress us as significant. In contrast to previous periods it has become a common term and it almost seems to become more common every year. The age is unconscious of the fact, however, and among English writers only one discussion of its nature beyond a sentence or two comes to light. This notable exception, Addison's well-known "Spectator" paper No. 160, asserts significantly in its introduction that although "There is no character more frequently given a writer than that of being a genius," he desires to "throw some thoughts together on so *uncommon* a subject." In the ensuing discussion he throws his weight rather surprisingly on the side of "these great natural geniuses" who are "hurried on by a natural fire and impetuosity to vast conceptions and noble sallies of imagination"; and he quite heretically asserts at the end that "An imitation of the best authors is not to compare with a good original." He has nothing to say, it should be noted, about inspiration, and his silence indicates the shift of emphasis, noted in the seventeenth century and maintained consistently in the eighteenth, from the supernatural to the human level in the explanation of exceptional powers.

After Addison's pioneer and unquestionably influential defence of the superiority of genius and originality, nothing comparable in extent or emphasis appears for nearly half a century. The recognition of genius is conventional; while admired as the highest faculty, it must according to the prevailing doctrine remain subject to the reason, to judgment, to good taste, and to the established rules. It is conventionally recognized as distinguished by power of invention but its inventiveness — its originality — is strictly limited to details of execution. No one in that age would have dreamed of suggesting that it is genius which dictates new forms, new rules of art. Occasional protests are voiced by a few persons, such

as John Dennis, in an occasional mood of uneasiness over such dogmas of the closed circle of artistic creation, but the weight of opinion is overwhelmingly against them.

### III

Meanwhile, new conceptions of individuality must have been taking shape largely unrealized, without exerting a transforming influence upon the conception of genius. Then, just after the middle of the century, the new interest bursts into articulate expression with unheralded vigor. In 1755 William Sharpe's "Dissertation on Genius," the first separate volume on the subject, forms a natural transition from the traditional belief in the supreme value of learning and labor to the exaltation of natural untrained powers. For he stresses the necessity of assiduous schooling of genius by every means. In any case to him goes the credit for directing attention to the importance of his theme and of inaugurating the long succession of volumes which recognize genius as one of the engrossing problems of human nature.

Four years later, in 1759, not only genius but original genius at last came into its own with the appearance of Edward Young's "Conjectures on Original Composition." Of this manifesto, the most complete and sweeping assertion of the sovereignty of this native faculty up to his time, at once enthusiastic yet incisive in exposition of the issues, it is difficult to speak with moderation. What Burns, Blake, and the "Lyrical Ballads" accomplished in opening new vistas for poetry, Young achieved in declaring the rights of the genius which produces such poetry. As the "Lyrical Ballads" inspired in Hazlitt "the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of spring," so Young impresses the student of criticism who toils through the arid stretches of neo-classicism's conventional praises of imitation. Although one of the few surviving veterans of the

Augustan circle, he broke through what he called the "frozen obstructions of age" in his seventy-sixth year to show genius the way out through the obstructions of Augustan dogma. In accomplishing this liberation he asserts, with significance which he could not wholly grasp but which we can now appreciate, that he opens up a subject which was "original" to him at least for he had "seen nothing hitherto written upon it."

In the light of this avowal and of our own perspective we can realize the force of his antitheses, elaborated with many a brilliant figure, between unrestricted expression of one's own creative impulse and imitation of models, between natural, inborn powers and acquired learning, between reliance upon one's individual self and subservience to authority or conventional standards. The conception of human character upon which he builds his case is that "[nature] brings us into the world all originals. No two faces, no two minds, are just alike; but all bear nature's evident mark of separation on them." Yet, "Born originals, how comes it to pass that we die copies?" "Not because the writer's harvest is over, the great reapers of antiquity having left nothing to be gleaned after them; nor because the human mind's teeming time is past, or because it is incapable of putting forth births; but because illustrious examples engross, prejudice, and intimidate." Hence, "That meddling ape imitation, as soon as we come to years of indiscretion (so let me speak), snatches the pen and blots out nature's mark of separation, cancels her kind intention, destroys all mental individuality." But by such servility — Young would say in our age that the world suffered from an inferiority complex — we do nothing less than "counteract nature and thwart her design."

The very constitution of "nature" and her very purposes then in Young's words demand reliance not on learning but on "our own native powers"; not on rules — which "like

crutches are a needful aid to the lame, though an impediment to the strong"—but on our own "natural strength." Not reason or taste, but original genius, he maintains, is the supreme arbiter of the creative mind. "Genius can set us right in compositions without rules of the learned, as conscience can set us right in life without the laws of the land." This natural power creates not by the process of "manufacture" through the agency of "those mechanics, arts and labour," but "spontaneously from the vital root" of our individual natures.

In full reliance, then, upon the resources of our irrational, "spontaneous" powers, Young declares that "it is high time that we restore in ourselves confidence in our own genius and abandon this abject prostration" before tradition and the works of others. The whole secret of original creation he sums up in the fervid injunction: "Dive deep into thy bosom; learn the depth, extent, bias and full fort of thy mind; contract full intimacy with the stranger within thee; and excite and cherish every spark . . . however scattered through the dull, dark mass of common thoughts . . . and let thy genius rise . . . as the sun from chaos; and if I should then say, like an Indian 'Worship it' yet should I say little more than . . . 'Reverence thyself.' . . . For nothing original can rise, nothing immortal can ripen in any other sun."

How fully prophetic of the dawning era of individualism was this vision of each man's independence Young could have little realized. But that the modestly named "Conjectures" have been confirmed as the fundamental belief in genius and in self-reliance since his time we cannot doubt. With enthusiastic literalness he drafts the charter of liberties which makes genius no longer slave but master in the stronghold of tradition. For the first time in English thought he makes "that god within" lord of all creation in art.

Within a few years after this declaration of rights the appearance of the first formal and extensive analyses of genius

which had ever been formulated reveals the rapidly spreading and crystallizing interest in the subject. In the very year in which the "Conjectures" appear, Alexander Gerard's "Essay on Taste" contains in a section of several pages "On the Connexion of Taste with Genius" the conventional characterization of genius as "the grand architect" and the orthodox doctrine that it needs taste to control it. Fifteen years later in 1774 his "Essay on Genius" takes to itself the credit of being the first book to examine systematically this "leading faculty of the mind." But the author betrays only genuine or pretended ignorance of a similar work which antedates his by seven years, the "Essay on Original Genius and its Various Modes of Exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, particularly in Poetry," by a fellow Scot, William Duff. This was, indeed, the first separate, formal treatment and the first in any language to bear openly the significant title of "Original Genius."

How much Duff may have owed to previous analysis is now difficult to determine, but so far as we can tell, his exposition is much more thorough than any earlier discussions. Certainly we know of nothing so detailed and fundamental as the inquiry of Book I into the "natures, properties, indications of genius, and of its various modes of exertion." Beginning with the new insistence upon originality, he stresses the radical distinction between genius and that which had been for more than a century conventionally identified as much the same faculty. This significant distinction he illustrates by the equally significant antithesis between Pope and Ossian — as perfect an indication of emerging revolts as could be desired. In this first book also he brings out an element which I have suggested to be of highest importance in the formulation of the idea of original genius, that is, the influence of a man's "ruling passion" upon the nature of his peculiar genius. But a much greater contribution is the emphasis, in the discussion of "Original

Genius" in Book II, upon its "irregular, vehement, and enthusiastic" nature, upon its irresistible spontaneity when within the empire of the imagination, "altogether absolute and unconfined," new images and sentiments "pour forth subject to no restraints and no rules." Thus the poet — to suggest the influence of such products of original genius — raises us to the same "pitch of ecstasy" which he himself enjoys. Happy is such a poet if he lives in a primitive society where "exemption from rules and restraints of criticism" allows the ecstasy of his original genius untrammeled freedom. Upon this note of primitivistic exaltation of genius, elaborated in unprecedented detail, he concludes this first systematic analysis of the "dominant faculty of invention."

Less "original" even in title and far less spirited than Duff's, Alexander Gerard's "Essay on Genius" (1774) is more psychologically thorough. Conceiving genius according to the traditional definition as the "faculty of invention" Gerard makes his principal contribution in the relationships which he finds between this faculty and the new prominent theory of association: genius being the power which utilizes this association of ideas and images for the creation of new forms or combinations. In his recognition of the distinctiveness of each individual as shaped by disposition, environment, and training in its individual method of embodying the laws of association, he shows himself in the new progressive current of his time. In voicing the praise of invention when it is "wild, irregular, and undisciplined" and in emphasizing the rôle of the passions as necessary to artistic creation, also, he belongs to new movements. But toward the end he disconcertingly retreats to conservative positions when he maintains the subordination of genius to taste and even the rôle of taste in supplying impulse to creation. His Scotch caution apparently submerges any tentative gleams of such enthusiasm as we find in the more ardent Duff. He shares with the latter, how-

ever, the credit of making the first systematic efforts to analyze genius.

Besides these three separate volumes a considerable number of separate essays shows a rapidly focusing interest in the fresh points of view. One of the most significant in revealing a new recognition of genius and even an outbreak of one of those epidemics of egotistical presumption which were to become so striking in the romantic period, is George Colman's series of fifteen papers called "The Genius" in "The St. James Chronicle" of 1761-62. In introducing his subject the author avers that "A genius is a character purely modern, and of so late an origin, that it has never yet been described or defined in any treatise, essay, lexicon, or dictionary. It is now, however, become almost universal." He then goes on to show how everybody in 1761 is suddenly setting up as a "genius"!

"The ancients, according to their wonted narrowness of soul, honoured a very small portion of the human race with this appellation. He, who to extraordinary talents had added extraordinary application, after the most arduous efforts towards excellence in some one art or science, was perhaps at last fortunate enough to extort this distinction. The more generous moderns demanded only the first requisites; and even those . . . may be supplied by substitutes. Vanity or assurance may pass . . . for superior faculties. The Genius, endowed with them, needs neither diligence nor assiduity. Supported by confidence, he despairs to halt along on the crutches of application. . . . Knowledge is rained down on his head like manna from heaven, and he has no care but to gather it as it falls. Almost every man . . . acquires learning without study; . . . writes without reading; and, being full as well acquainted with one thing as another, or, what is more extraordinary, without even pretending to know anything at all, is an unquestionable Genius." Coming from a man unusually sensitive to current sentiment, such a full

recognition of an extreme reaction toward egotistical reliance on untutored spontaneity as opposed to the neo-classicism's dependence on learning and labor alone, shows how far a new faith in native human powers was, in certain quarters at least, taking shape in both theory and practice.

Another aspect of fundamental import, just being definitely formulated, comes to light in an essay in "The Trifler" of 1788 "On the Influence of Liberty on Genius." In answer to Montesquieu's famous argument postulating climate as a predominant influence in the determination of character, the anonymous writer contends that it is not the natural so much as political environment which is an all-powerful shaping force; that, specifically, under an oppressive government "the genius of many is intimidated, and thereby lost," but that in free governments genius thrives and is in fact dependent on liberty. Such an important generalization, reminding us of Hume's contemporary contention that "a strong genius succeeds best in republics, a refined taste in monarchies," shows how men's minds were turning toward all external conditions making for freedom in individual expression. It shows, too, a scientific as well as an emotional interest in genius and that this interest was no longer scattered, casual or tentative, but widespread and thoroughgoing.

Not to prolong beyond the limits of a general survey this summary of representative analyses, we must note a final essay of unpretentious, but refreshingly simple and precise tone. William Jackson, the well-known organist and composer of Exeter, in his inquiry "Whether Genius be born, or acquired" (1798) anticipates more than any previous analysts the exact and searching method of attack upon the problem which characterizes nineteenth century investigation. Summing up concisely the existing theories he reasserts the innate and essentially unacquirable nature of genius in opposition to the neo-classical emphasis upon the belief, *poeta fit*. He

also gives the *coup de grâce* to a persistent eighteenth-century error which tended to confuse the elementary difference between genius and taste. Most valuable of all, however, is his distinction here drawn definitely for the first time, between genius and talent. "A man of genius must have talents, but talents are possessed by many without it. Genius, tho' possessing talents, has not always the power of shewing them, for want of mechanical facility; and talents are frequently exercised with so much excellence as to be mistaken for genius. However paradoxical this may appear, all difficulty vanishes, by considering that the characteristic of genius is invention, a creation of something not before existing; to which talents make no pretence; and although talents and genius are sometimes united; yet they are in their nature distinct. . . . I make a distinction between talents and genius, but it must not be imagined that I wish to set them at variance; for the nearer talents can be brought to resemble genius, the stronger will be their effect; and the more genius possesses the ability of making its creation manifest, the less will its powers be confined to that mind in which they were originally conceived." This difference had been felt, of course, since ancient times, and many efforts to express it had been made; but Jackson first uses the terms now familiar to us, and so he marks the beginning of what to us is the ordinary modern idea of the transcendence of genius above other abilities. He also marks the end of this epoch of formulation of the rapidly developing conception, and just at the close of the century lays a definite foundation for the universal interest of the nineteenth.

Apart from these representative analytical efforts, other rhapsodists besides Young were exalting genius, usually in terms of violent revolt against imitation. Among these must be recorded a Scotchman of well-known stormy temper, John Pinkerton, and William Blake. The former's extreme in-

transigence, as expressed in "Letters of Literature" of 1785, betrayed him into ill-concealed contempt and even truculence. "All kinds of imitation, all imitations whatever, sink into that class of poetry which we read to ladies at a tea-table; and then give to the servant, that he may not burn his hands in carrying off the tea-urn." No man "of real genius," he adds, "can be an imitator . . . originality is coessential with genius, as Milton tells us that light is coeternal with the deity." Apparently he would abolish schools for the guidance even of the young and inexperienced, for he attacks "the complete folly of instituting Academies of Painting, or any other art, or science; that is, Schools of Imitation. Did ever any one good painter arise from an academy? Never; not even one of the slightest reputation. . . . In our academy, as in others, all imitate, none invent: the art is of course at a stand, soon to fall, if other means do not foster it. . . . It is to be hoped some future prince will just have sense enough to dissolve this lump of regal folly; and to say to art and science, 'Be free.'" Shall they receive no suggestion or guidance from past performance? No. "To young writers especially, Imitation cannot be held out in too just, in too contemptible, a light. They ought even to be told that there is more applause due to a bad original, than to the best of copies. By these means they will at least endeavour to be original."

In his most extravagant tirade he exclaims "Poetry knows no rules. The code of laws which genius prescribes to his subjects, will ever rest in their own bosoms." Nor are there even any rules of criticism! The ones we profess to follow "are drawn from Homer, Sophocles, and Pindar: what these masters do, say the critics, is right, and everything else is wrong." But, "Poor judges! Ye slaves who judge of your masters! Is not Nature greater than Homer, Sophocles, or Pindar? Is not genius the supreme arbiter and lord of Nature's whole domain; her superior, her king, her god? Bring out

your candle then and teach the sun how to exert his meridian power!"'

These spring freshets of blind rebellion which would sweep away all precedents and all principles were reinforced for Pinkerton as for so many others by rhapsodic primitivism. His first letter "On Barbaric Poetry" exalts the "tempestuous passions" of early society which call forth "a poetry warm, rapid, and tempestuous, that, like a large river swelling from a bleak mountain, carries the reader along in the barge of fancy, now by vales fragrant with wild flowers, now thro woods resounding with untaught melody, but most generally thro deserts replete with romantic and with dreadful prospects." Thus Pinkerton makes a vital contribution to the emerging doctrine of the supreme emotional and lawless nature of genius, illustrating by his own intemperance of expression the very quality of genius which he so fanatically deifies.

A still more striking illustration of insurgent genius, not only in theory and in method of expression, but in every manifestation of personality, is William Blake, the most extreme embodiment of original genius in the eighteenth century. From him, of course, we expect no coherent utterance and little development of a theory, but his fragmentary outbursts are unmistakable in import, and when we assemble his many separate utterances on genius we find a consistent and pervasive belief of fundamental character. For Blake, in a more literal manner perhaps than anyone since Plato and the Hebrew prophets, identifies the expressions of genius with divine inspiration. The poetic genius for him is the true man; "it was the first principle," for "it is the Holy Ghost in man." This conviction that genius is the organ of expressing the divine must be regarded as one of his controlling beliefs — if emphatic reiteration be any test, for in great variety of forms it pervades his prose writings. He expounds it in a form which we may characterize as the physiology of inspiration:

Daughter of Beulah! . . .

Come into my hand

By your mild power descending down the nerves of my right arm  
From out the portals of my brain.

By this divine afflatus he explains in a dozen passages his own rhapsodic work in both literature and visual designs, as when he declares that "he is under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly," which function through his "genius or Angel." Hence he derives sanction for the confession of faith: "I know of no other Christianity and no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and of mind to exercise the Divine Arts of the Imagination." And hence we must "cast aside from Poetry all that is not inspiration."

Thus Blake becomes the most specific violent exponent of the spontaneous, impulsive elements of genius in opposition to all restraints of convention or the guidance of reason. "The Reasoning Power in Man . . . is a false body, an incrustation over my immortal Spirit." But "Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules." In rather startling Freudian phrase, he declares that we should "sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires."

Abstinence sows sand all over  
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,  
But desire gratified  
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

So, also, he says, "Damn braces. Bless relaxes. . . . No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings." This suggestive figure he relates definitely to our subject in his injunction: "When thou seest an eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head." In such rhapsodic, often mystic accents does he represent the nature of genius as subject to no human restraints, obeying no laws but the dictates of spontaneous feeling and "divine inspiration." Thus his vision of the supreme claims of genius, imperious because divine, imparts to his mystic outbursts the oracular tone of

the seer, and the intense literalness of his assertions make him the most consummate prophet of genius in his century and one of its most notable prophets in any age. As the incarnation of genius of eccentric originality, moreover, he provides both in his life and writing, a practical demonstration of his beliefs.

## IV

In Blake, the rhapsodist, a developing recognition of genius inaugurated in the manifesto of the early rhapsodist, Edward Young, reaches culmination and closes an epoch. The survey of the formulation here made is representative, not in any degree complete. Within less than half a century many separate discussions and unnumbered passages, often in anonymous reviews, disclose an awakened appreciation and often enthusiasm for the subject and the issues which emerging beliefs in genius necessarily creates. After 1750 poets, too, are inspired — in their didactic eighteenth-century fashion — to celebrate the superior claims of the original, spontaneous creative power, as may be illustrated by the mere title of Richard Jago's "Labour and Genius: or, The Mill-Stream and the Cascade," (1762), or (I choose the best of a half dozen examples) by John Jennings's lines from his "Ode to Genius" appearing in the "Gentlemen's Magazine" of 1767:

Ethereal nature's darling child  
With fiery eyes and spirit wild,  
Genius, young eagle of the soul,  
Aspiring, bold, above controul:  
On rapid wing, 't is thine to rove  
Creation's various blossom'd grove;  
Where, crowding em'lous on thy view  
The scenes of beauties, grand and new:  
You seize, with living rapture warm,  
Instantaneous every charm.

Intrinsically worthless as such verses may be and bearing the imprint of still prevailing convention, they do serve to celebrate the power "above control" which by "spirit wild" was

rapidly liberating expression from the conventions. Deservingly forgotten as they are indeed, they show that the "cascade" springs from a higher source than the "mill-stream" which it creates.

Obscure, also, with the exception of Young and Blake, are these prose writers whom we have surveyed; apparently they gained little recognition or influence among their contemporaries, at least in England. Nor did all of them emphasize originality in express terms. But the mere number of separate volumes, essays, and other discussions of genius in the second half of the century in contrast with the silence or with scant conventional notice of the conception up to that time is in itself eloquent testimony of a distinct movement. Of this movement these representative figures, however unrecognized in their own and later times, were the real heralds.

From their pronouncements certain facts stand forth. The first, obviously, is the fact that the numerous discussions make articulate a new consciousness of genius and direct general attention to the subject. The next is the fact of the revival restoration with literal force of certain elements in the traditional doctrine of inspiration, to which the homage of lip-service had been paid since antiquity, but which had been consistently subordinated in active theory by the overlordship of precedent and dogma. Since Seneca criticism had docilely repeated the belief, "*deus nobis inest*," and then proceeded to confine the "gods," as in the old tale, within the bottle of rules and established forms. The exponents of genius liberated, as it were, the "genius," making its expression now independent of restraints; only they do not, with the exception of Blake, revive the theory of divine inspiration so much as rationalize it on the human level and give it effective mastery. Critical theory, to be sure, professed traditionally to praise inventiveness and the spontaneous graces beyond the reach of art and labor, which only inspiration and

genius can achieve, but so formidably limited the range of free creativeness as to reduce its activities to minor variations. The exponents of genius, on the contrary, more or less explicitly, with varying emphasis, make the individual creative power really free from traditional limitations and master over authority and rules. Thus they reverse the respective rôles which law and creative impulse had played in the creation of art, and for the first time open up limitless opportunities to the expression of genius. The third and final fact which stands out from our survey is the emphasis placed upon the unique individuality of each genius by the peculiar English developments of the belief in the humours and the ruling passion. Reinforced by the related English conception of "originales" the aspects of temperament involved in this theory—native individual peculiarity, emotional or instinctive character, and impossibility or difficulty of control—lend their force to the existing idea of genius. So based upon the accepted explanation of temperament, genius now becomes conceived as the imperious power of the individual self, receiving its sanction from the innate uniqueness and independence of every personality. As it is the supreme expression of human personality, moreover, not only its right but its very obligation is to be as original as possible. When this conception is wrought out, as it is in all essentials in the last few decades of the eighteenth century, it awaits only the universal recognition in both theory and practical expression in the century to follow.

## V

In the process of formulation this new belief in genius received important if not essential aid from several vigorous ideas which were developing simultaneously. Most fundamental was the triumph of the historical point of view, which maintained the potential equality of the ancient and the moderns, with some recognition of the possible superiority

of the moderns — a view which necessarily upheld the equality of genius in all ages and therefore its freedom from servile dependence upon models and standards. Such a conception of the rights of genius is naturally based on the growing faith in universal human rights, with the democratic emphasis on the worth of the individual and his liberty of expression. Hence it is held that genius should receive enthusiastic encouragement as the supreme example of individual powers. This emphasis on the individual, as seen in the development of the theory of the humours and of the ruling passion, is based on the belief in the individual's right to peculiarities of feeling, which make one different from all other men. So the exaltation of emotion over reason found natural expression in the belief that genius finds its highest sanction in free play of emotion. So also the increasingly prominent position accorded to the imagination, as the creative faculty working in a unique way in each individual, supports the doctrine that genius must function spontaneously, unhampered by learning, relieved of the necessity of toilsome effort. But as emotion and imagination find themselves inevitably limited by all the traditional and conventional environments of civilization they should turn for inspiration to the example of the primitive state, in which human nature could express its genius in perfect liberty — with ideal abandon.

Drawing thus into itself the vitality of these ancillary ideas, the conception of original genius fuses their strength with its own new power and in this transition period becomes one of the most important animating forces of the romantic movement. Like the magnetic core of a dynamo it generates power and like the electric plant it transmits current in all directions. Embodying all the forces of revolt, it gives validity to individual expression of emotion and imagination in art and in life. Philosophically considered, it makes the will of the individual ego final law, and in the developments of Ger-

man thought gives powerful stimulus to the interpretation of the world in terms of the individual self.

## VI

Little could our English analysts and rhapsodists of genius have dreamed that their conception would radiate into every area of human interest. Yet their doctrine does far more than to inaugurate a new era of freedom of expression in the various realms of the arts. The doctrine focuses all the necessary elements of the belief in what we now call individualism. Embodied in its most extreme incarnations it becomes "Titanism" or even "Satanism." Further developed in more direct descent, the original genius becomes Carlyle's hero and culminates in Nietzsche's superman. Applied to the general human level, the faith in genius as one's essential self, and hence the complete reliance upon that self, is the pervasive teaching of Emerson and Whitman. "Temperament is fate" and "Obey that impulse" have become commonplace shibboleths, and recently a new psychology bids us not to suppress the desires which surge up from the subconscious — our most "vital" self. For as William Blake declared in his own "unique" way,

Abstinence sows sand all over  
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,  
But desire gratified  
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

Into such familiar belief our modern faith in individualism has expanded with well-nigh irresistible energy. But this faith received no uncertain impetus from the doctrine first formulated by that group in the eighteenth century which deserve the name of heralds of original genius. It was not Emerson or Nietzsche, Bergson or Freud, but Edward Young who said: "Dive deep into thy bosom; learn the depth, extent, bias and full fort of thy mind; contract full intimacy with the stranger within thee; and excite and cherish every

spark . . . however scattered through the dull, dark mass of common thoughts . . . and let thy genius rise . . . as the sun from chaos; and if I should then say, like an Indian ‘Worship it’ yet should I say little more than . . . ‘Reverence thyself.’ . . . For nothing original can rise, nothing immortal can ripen in any other sun.”



*IVANHOE AND ITS LITERARY  
CONSEQUENCES*



## *IVANHOE AND ITS LITERARY CONSEQUENCES*

By G. H. MAYNADIER

A LITTLE more than six years ago there was a literary anniversary which, it has seemed to me, passed without due notice — the centennial of *Ivanhoe*. Despite the date of 1820 on the title-page, it was in the year 1819, on the eighteenth of December, that this famous romance was put on sale, and in all Scott's literary career, no event had more significance. It not only brought Scott to the climax of his popularity, which had been growing steadily ever since *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared in 1805; but likewise for European literature as a whole, it has been important. With the series of Scott's romances which begins with *Ivanhoe*, comes the full flowering of the historical novel. The seeds scattered by the breezes of its popularity fell not alone on the soil of fiction, to produce in continual succession and in many lands rich crops to the present day. In history likewise they germinated, and a crop of great romantic historians spring directly from Scott. Here, to be sure, he has not affected foreign literature so much as in the novel; but on historical writing in English his influence has been enormous. Nobody would place Scott high among historians because of actual history from his pen, such as his *Life of Napoleon*; yet singularly enough, with the exception of Gibbon, who has cast his mighty spell on all who since his day have written history in the English tongue, it is doubtful if any one man has so influenced English historical writing as Sir Walter Scott.

Among his novels in their effect on historians, *Ivanhoe* may not have been so much of an immediate influence as several

others. It is something of an undeserved glory, after all, that clusters round *Ivanhoe* as historical fiction, for this most famous work of Scott's is more successful as a typical romance than as an historical novel proper. Of course the two are not synonymous. Every historical novel is likely to be a romance, but the majority of romances are not historical. And *Ivanhoe* is best on its non-historical side. Lockhart observes truly that "as a work of art, *Ivanhoe* is perhaps the first of all Scott's efforts . . . ; nor have the strength and splendor of his imagination been displayed to higher advantage than in some of the scenes of this romance. But I believe that no reader who is capable of thoroughly comprehending the author's Scotch character and Scotch dialogue will ever place *Ivanhoe*, as a work of genius, on the same level with *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, or *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*." With equal justice Lockhart might have named some novels that rise above *Ivanhoe* for their presentation of history. Are the royal brothers, Richard and John, so very much alive? And how about Robin Hood and his merry men? Not historical, to be sure, they have nevertheless been so well known in popular story as to impose on a novelist who would make use of them the same sort of limitation in treatment as characters that are historical. Already in *Waverley*, "bonny Prince Charley" — "a prince to live and die under," as young Edward Waverley called him in fine enthusiasm after first being presented to him — had been more alive than any of the historical personages of *Ivanhoe*. So to most readers are Mary Stuart in *The Abbot*, Elizabeth in *Kenilworth*, Louis XI of France in *Quentin Durward*, and Saladin and likewise Richard in *The Talisman*. And the pictures of Highland life in *A Legend of Montrose* are more vivid and more skilfully introduced than those of English domestic life in the twelfth century as shown in the household of Cedric the Saxon.

No, not on the historical side is *Ivanhoe* deservedly so fa-

mous, and as Lockhart says, on its human side it has been surpassed; but on its romantic side, one can hardly praise it too highly. The tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche; the disguise of Ivanhoe, penetrated when the marshals unhelm him before Rowena, that he may receive the Chaplet of Honor from her hands; the disguise of Richard Cœur-de-Lion and his revelation of himself in the forest to Robin Hood; the truly great character of Rebecca, her subjection to test by combat, and the appearance of the young Saxon knight as her champion; the natural kindness and real nobility of Ivanhoe, and the grateful return for them from Isaac and Rebecca — a very living Isaac, too, even if reminiscent somewhat of Shylock in his anxiety about his ducats and his daughter; and above all, the storming of Front-de-Bœuf's castle of Torquilstone — could anything in fiction be more effectively romantic?

I remember talking with an old lady, gifted, alert, and charming — I have the honor to claim her a kinswoman of mine — who died well past ninety some years ago in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She was telling me of her childhood in Exeter, where she grew up in a large household circle, for her grandfather, a distinguished physician of his day, lived in patriarchal style, with children of his children frequently under his roof. One of the vivid recollections of her girlhood was the reading aloud, by an aunt of hers, while the family sat round the fire in the evening, of the Waverley novels as they came out; and as she looked back, no fiction had ever seemed to this lady in her long life more engrossing. "Above all," she exclaimed, "how well I remember that first reading of *Ivanhoe* when I was hardly more than ten years old! The pictures that it made! I shall never forget Ulrica on the burning tower."

She was right in her enthusiasm. As that last tower of Torquilstone crashes down into the flames, with the old Saxon

dame on it, waving her arms and chanting her wild old heathen war-songs, there you have one of the lasting pictures of fiction — melodramatic, to be sure, but so highly romantic and so vividly painted as, once seen, to be unforgettable. It is the unsurpassed melodramatic mediæval pictures which have created the peculiar power of *Ivanhoe*. The non-historical but great romantic in it, rather than the introduction of actual history, has given it its name as a great historical novel.

And verily it has been a great novel with great consequences. It was more popular outside of Scotland than any of the Scottish novels; for after all, those who, in Lockhart's phrase, were "capable of thoroughly comprehending the author's Scotch character and Scotch dialogue," were mostly themselves Scotch; *Ivanhoe*, on the contrary, could be comprehended just as well by an American or an Englishman as by a Scotchman. Here, moreover, it was evident for the first time that Scotland itself was not necessary to give "the author of *Waverley*" success as a novelist. Once he had taken his story across the Tweed, there was no reason why he should not confidently do so again. Also this was a more daring excursion into the past than any which had preceded it. In prose, Scott had never ventured into the Middle Ages before. *Waverley*, published in 1814, and the novels of the five following years, had gone nowhere farther back into history than *Old Mortality*, which went back to 1679. The success of *Ivanhoe* gave Scott confidence for further departures into remote periods, which in the matter of actual history, were generally better than *Ivanhoe* itself. So there came the splendid series which included *The Abbot* in 1820, *Kenilworth* in '21, the next year *The Fortunes of Nigel*, and in successive years *Quentin Durward*, *Redgauntlet*, *The Talisman*, *Woodstock*, and in 1829 *Anne of Geierstein*. It was by the bolder expeditions into the historical past which most of these were, even more than by those which preceded *Ivanhoe*, that Scott raised the historical

novel to a position of the highest honor in literature, and so made possible some of the most famous characters of fiction — Leatherstocking, d'Artagnan, and Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, Henry Esmond, and many, many others.

Yet the historical novel is very far from beginning with Scott. It begins, in our literature, fifty-two years before *Waverley* and fifty-seven before *Ivanhoe*, with *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, An Historical Romance*, by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Leland of Dublin. This, so far as is known, is the first novel of its kind in English. Defoe's *Memoires of a Cavalier* has neither the interest of a well-constructed plot nor the reality of character which we expect in a good historical novel. And nothing else before *Longsword* makes even the faintest approach to such a work.

Not that *Longsword* is a romance which would attract many readers to-day. It has, to be sure, a good enough plot concerning the adventures, during wars in France in the reign of Henry III, of the natural son of Henry II, William, Earl of Salisbury, surnamed Longsword, whose tomb you may still see in Salisbury Cathedral. There is a secondary love story, not unskillfully introduced, of a young French girl of noble birth, disguised like Elizabethan heroines in doublet and hose, and the young gentleman whom she marries. But the characters are wooden, mere puppets in expressing emotion. The story is utterly lifeless.

Yet despite its crude workmanship, here in the history of literature is an important novel, for Dr. Leland in his modest way aims to do what Scott and others after him have done in a great way. In his preface — "advertisement," he calls it — he says that he seeks to entertain by relating facts of history, which he may alter slightly for the better effect of his story. "If too great liberties have been taken," he continues, "in altering historical accounts, those who look for amusement will forgive, while the learned and critical . . . will deem it . . .

of too little consequence . . . for . . . censure." The doctrine absolutely of all the great historical novelists.

From Leland to Scott, though, was a long road and one slowly travelled. The romantic novel of the eighteenth century was more inclined to imitate the material of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, two years later than *Longsword*, which made use of the merely melodramatic and picturesque in mediaeval life rather than events of history. But the romantic storytellers, however slowly, made steadily increasing use of history. Scott himself used it effectively in his metrical romances; and Jane Porter in her *Scottish Chiefs*, four years before *Waverley*, brought the prose historical romance closer than it ever had been before to what Scott was to make it. Then came the "Wizard" himself, incomparably trained for his work by all the accidents of fate — his birth in one of the most romantically picturesque cities of the world, family traditions, the places he visited both in his search for health as a child and in his early legal work, his own taste in reading, and the friends that he made. So after the preliminary training of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake*, he came to the novels which still more have made his fame, that marvellous series whose culmination, for the various reasons which we have seen, may be said to be *Ivanhoe*; for *Ivanhoe* is probably, even though not the best, nevertheless the best-known historical novel in English. The seed of *Longsword* had come to rich fruition, from which in turn have come the many who have tried their hands, with varying ability and success, at historical fiction all the way from Cooper through Harrison Ainsworth and G. P. R. James, Dickens, Thackeray, Kingsley, Reade, George Eliot, Blackmore, and Mark Twain, to Mr. Winston Churchill and others of our own day.

This influence of Scott on the novel has of course long been realized, but what is not so generally realized is his effect on historical writing. Yet the six historians of the English race

in the nineteenth century who have won the greatest favor as men of letters were all deeply affected by Scott. The three older of them, it is true, felt first the spell of earlier romance than his, but still they were all young enough to be impressionable when *Waverley* appeared. Thomas Carlyle was then eighteen and a half years old; William Hickling Prescott was five months younger; and Macaulay lacked three months of being fourteen. Of the others, Motley was only three months old, and Froude and Parkman were still unborn; so these three came into the world late enough to be brought up on Scott's novels, and they were. All six, early impressed by him, made a conscious attempt to popularize history, to give it — so far as an historian might — the same sort of interest that Scott did in his novels. Thus they set the dominant fashion for historical writing in English from the thirties to the eighties of the nineteenth century.

Macaulay was the first to express the new theory of historical writing, which he did in his essay, "History," published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1828. It was inspired—at least nominally—by Henry Neale's *Romance of History, England* — a work consisting of three volumes of short stories "illustrating"<sup>1</sup> the reigns of English monarchs from William I to Charles I. The author, who killed himself that same year for reasons not certainly known, was a young lawyer, the son of an heraldic engraver, with a deep interest in literature and history both. He had had some poems published, and also some lectures on English literature which he had delivered. His stories in the *Romance of History* have at their best, which is not very often, a suggestion of Hawthorne's historical short stories, such as *The Gray Champion* and *Endicott and the Red Cross*. At their worst, their people are unreal and the situations forced. All in all, it is surprising that Macaulay should have considered the work seriously enough to take it even as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Neale's Preface.

a starting-point for an essay in the *Edinburgh*. True, it can be called hardly even that. Macaulay here surpasses his usual peculiar fashion of scarcely mentioning the work which is his nominal subject, except on the first page; his only reference to Henry Neele's book is a footnote, at the beginning of the essay, referring to the title, *History*. But the full and clear expression of Macaulay's doctrine shows that in him Neele's idea of emphasizing the "Romance of History" met with a sympathetic response.

When the perfect historian writes, says Macaulay, while he "relates no fact . . . which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony," at the same time, "by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. . . . Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images present in every line."

And then comes that well-known paragraph: "If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials

which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government and the history of the people would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in *Old Mortality*; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel*."

Previously,<sup>1</sup> in reviewing Hallam's *Constitutional History*, Macaulay had come near preaching the same doctrine. "Good histories," he said, "in the proper sense of the word, we have not. But we have good historical romances, and good historical essays. The imagination and the reason . . . have made partition of a province of literature . . . and now they hold their respective portions in severalty, instead of holding the whole in common." He goes on to compare "the two kinds of composition into which history has been thus divided" to a "map" and a "painted landscape. The picture, though it places the object before us, does not enable us to ascertain with accuracy the form and dimensions of its component parts. . . . The map . . . presents no scene to the imagination; but it gives us exact information as to the bearings of the various points, and is a more useful companion to the traveller or the general than the painting could be. . . ." Again he says, "Sir Walter Scott gives us a novel; Mr. Hallam, a critical and argumentative history." The inference is plain that already Macaulay believed that in a truly great history the reader should find, combined with accurate information, the interest which Scott was able to impart to his romances. The significance of Macaulay's specific references to the great romancer is still more apparent.

Carlyle, as an historian, produces such a different effect from Macaulay that one would never think they held identi-

<sup>1</sup> In 1827.

cally the same theory of the way history should be written. Yet that they did, Carlyle shows in his essay on Scott,<sup>1</sup> published ten years after Macaulay's essay on *History*. Carlyle's judgment, often at fault, is here almost consistently so. In the whole remarkable essay is nothing but mistaken criticism, except when Carlyle touches on the marvellous range of Scott's characters — "from Davie Deans up to Richard Cœur-de-Lion; from Meg Merrilies to Die Vernon and Queen Elizabeth" — and when he speaks of what Scott has done for history. For his historical novels "have taught all men this truth, which looks like a truism, and yet was as good as unknown to writers of history and others, till so taught: that the by-gone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men. Not abstractions were they . . . but men in buff or other coats and breeches, with color in their cheeks, with passions in their stomachs, and the idioms, features, and vitalities of very men. It is a little word this; inclusive of a great meaning! History will henceforth have to take thought of it."

So history did. Already Carlyle had applied the new theory in his own work. *The French Revolution* appeared in 1837, and who can read the story of the royal flight to Varennes, in that shortest night of the year in 1791, without being held as by the most absorbing romance ever penned? And a few months after *The French Revolution*, there had been published in Boston, on Christmas Day,<sup>2</sup> *Ferdinand and Isabella*, the first of Prescott's histories. Prescott was not so big a man as Carlyle; none of his histories engrosses you like *The French Revolution*; but again you have the very thrill of romance as you read of the hopes and fears of the Spanish sovereigns, of the treasures beyond belief of the Peruvian king, and still more

<sup>1</sup> "Sir Walter Scott," *London and Westminster Review*, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> 1837.

as you accompany Cortez from the coast on his daring march up by snow-capped Popocatepetl to the City of Mexico.

History again took thought of Scott in the *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*. Froude, as different in effect from Carlyle as Carlyle is from Macaulay, was nevertheless his devoted disciple, and he accepted entirely his master's theory of writing history. As he expounds it at length<sup>1</sup> in the last volume of his *Life of Carlyle*, he finds the chief task of the historian to bring back to life "dead things and dead people"; to bring them back by producing all of a novelist's or a dramatist's reality of character and scene. Applying this doctrine, Froude makes his Mary Stuart — whatever you may think of the accuracy of his conception of her — as real as Scott's in *The Abbot*; and no less interesting is his account of the escape from Lochleven than that of the novel. Motley, another disciple of Carlyle, shows his indebtedness to the master in two ways — imitation of phrase and other detail, and general method. Indebted solely to Carlyle for the first, the latter he probably developed independently, for in childhood and youth he was an untiring reader of Scott and Cooper. With less power than Carlyle and Froude of making his people real, he, a born "colorist in language," spent his romantic energy in historical composition rather in painting pictures, "sumptuous and glowing," which Dr. Holmes<sup>2</sup> justly compares to those of Rubens, that Motley so much admired. Such is that gorgeous canvas at the beginning of *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, of the abdication of Charles V at Brussels. And the spirit which created those pictures, however stimulated in maturity, was nourished in its infancy on the romances of which *Ivanhoe* is the most famous.

Macaulay, who by his theory of historical writing already

<sup>1</sup> *Carlyle in London*, II, pp. 200 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *John Lothrop Motley, a Memoir* (Boston, 1878), p. 73.

quoted should best have incorporated Scott's methods in history proper, by the limitations of his brilliant genius fell short of his great contemporary, Carlyle, in doing so. But his attention to detail, which is of the novelist, goes far toward creating the marvellous power of his exposition, and sometimes in narrative he attains the high standard he sets for his ideal historian. Witness his account of the Battle of the Boyne, the story of the death of Charles II, and that of the growing defection from James II as the Revolution of 1688 hurries on. Little as Macaulay likes that king, he makes him after all a human being from whom you cannot withhold your sympathy, when, one after another, friends and family abandon him, till, on hearing that his daughter Anne has gone over to the Prince of Orange, he cries, "God help me! My own children have deserted me." Of this James you do not have to look for one half in a romance and the other in a history. Both halves are there in Macaulay.

Finally Parkman, from his youth, like these others, a lover of poetry and novels, unites in his *France and England in North America*, to which he gives significantly the sub-title, *A Series of Historical Narratives*, the accuracy of the historian and the charm of the romancer. He is second to none in wakening the dead past to the magic of immediate life, in transporting his reader to scenes and events hundreds or thousands of miles and two or three centuries away. And so, thanks to Francis Parkman, even the lazy city idler can feel his muscles play in exuberant strength, as he paddles his canoe with La Salle or Father Marquette, and their swarthy Indian guides, along some river or lake hitherto unknown to Europeans. He breathes all the freshness of the woods and within his four walls has all the sense of illimitable freedom that came to the early explorers when they gazed for the first time on those fresh-water seas, the Great Lakes, or struck out into pathless forest or prairie in those "realms of solitude where the Mis-

sissippi rolled its sullen tide, and the Ohio wound its belt of silver through the verdant woodlands.”<sup>1</sup> And when the final act in the conflict of so many years is come, he partakes of Montcalm’s determination to win or die, and of Wolfe’s anxious expectancy as his boat drifts in the darkness with the St. Lawrence tide to the path which shall lead to the Heights of Abraham, he himself repeating in a low voice Gray’s *Elegy*, and then saying to the officers with him, “Gentlemen, I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec.”

Yes, *Ivanhoe* has helped, directly or indirectly, to build great histories as well as great novels.

<sup>1</sup> *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Chapter 1.



THE ASIAN LYRIC AND ENGLISH  
LITERATURE



## THE ASIAN LYRIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

By H. L. SEAVER

FITZGERALD'S *Omar* is the only translation from Asian lyric verse, apart from the poetry of the Old Testament, which is really a part of English literature. To explain his unique success by attributing it to poetic genius, though substantially the truth, is largely to admit that it is inexplicable. Certain circumstances, however, which may be noted as contributory to that success bear interestingly on the question: what chance is there that other Asian lyrics may be transplanted into the English garden?

The decade of the '50's was already interested in the Levant and, not unsympathetically, through coöperation with the Turk in the Crimean War, in Islam. It is the decade of Burton's amazing account of his *Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah* and of final editions of the *Arabian Nights* and *Manners and Customs of the Egyptians* of E. W. Lane. Far more significant, however, among English books is the disconcerting *Origin of Species*, published in the same year (1859) as the *Rubaiyat*, whose fatalistic and wistful Epicureanism fell in so opportunely with the mood of a disillusioned half-century. Of the translator it is to be noted that he was not a scholar but a whimsical idler from the country gentry who moved but as an amateur among the Cambridge pundits of Levantine tongues and culture; scruples of scholarship, consequently, did not frighten him from some freedom in adapting his material to his sensitive poetic feeling. He took over from his original, furthermore, a novel and memorable verse form, the quatrain, whose fourth line makes an acquiescent and pensive

return to the rhyme sound which seems momentarily, after the first couplet, to have been abandoned.

Since prolonged contacts with Asian culture have been developing a more intelligent, consequently a more sympathetic interest among English readers, who presumably are now more receptive than the Victorians to the expression of any yet untranslated Asian lyric moods. Recently, too, poets of distinction have turned to Asiatic material.

## I

The decade of the eighties produced a notable body of descriptive literature about Asia, ranging from painstaking and now invaluable record, like Mr. Edward Morse's in Japan, through the splashing journalism of Mr. Kipling (*Plain Tales*, 1887), to the sensitive if somewhat superficial impressionism of Pierre Loti.

The decade of the nineties heard finer and profounder report. A new approach to Indian culture, necessary to correct the prejudices and antagonisms of Mr. Kipling's picture, dates from 1896, when Mr. Havell, entering India to import European art traditions, recognized the noble integrity of native art and reorganized the Calcutta museum and art school in the intent of saving the esthetic inheritance of India from degradation through imitation of Europe. To the more discriminating observation of this decade America contributed Mr. La Farge, whose voyage to Japan and the South Seas inspired his *Artist's Letters from Japan* (1897); and Lafcadio Hearn, who, reaching Japan in 1891, continued thereafter his interpretation of the spiritual life of the Island Kingdom.

With the first decade of the new century came a group of scholars' books on the literatures of Asian peoples: Aston's *Japanese Literature* (1899), Giles' *Chinese Literature* (1901), Huart's *Arabic Literature* (1903), in one series; in the series to which Mr. Wendell contributed his brilliant *Literary His-*

tory of America, Frazer's *Literary History of India* (1898), Browne's standard *Literary History of Persia* (2 v., 1902, 1906), Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* (1907); and the gigantic *Ottoman Poetry* of Gibb (5 v., 1900-1907). Though these works have a wealth of versions, it is safe to say that scarce a lyric among them will ever enter any anthology of English poetry.

In the decade 1910-20 appeared many volumes of versions by poets, trusting, probably, that a generation of Asian studies has developed a public which would not allow fine rendering of Asiatic verse to come so near as did Fitzgerald's to perishing unnoticed. To what degree have these contemporary poets given really poetic expression to the material accessible, though unattractively, in the work of scholars?

## II

Among all the Asian peoples the erotic note is insistent in that lyric verse which may be called popular in the sense that, in some examples at least, it is anonymous and traditional, and even in the examples composed by the cultured poet is addressed to the populace and has currency among them, usually in some simple musical setting. English tradition, though very rich in love poetry in its own key, has till the present been indisposed to the erotic note. That tradition, however, has been in the field of fiction undergoing revolutionary change, and a feature of many recent poetic movements has been the venture into the erotic field, frequently veiling its audacity under exotic associations of a foreign culture. Of the actual love poetry of Asia, from the ferocious note of the Afghan to the fastidious and nostalgic note of China, none has attained any currency in English.

In *Coloured Stars* (1918) and *A Garden of Bright Waters* (1920), little volumes not of erudition but intended "primarily as a book of poems," Mr. E. Powys Mathers rendered some

hundred of these popular Asian lyrics. His versions, occasionally metrical but mostly in cadenced verse, attained through poetic diction and imagery (what verse is more gorgeously imaged than the Asian?) some of the brilliance of contemporary Imagist verse, with its preferences for "always the exact word," its avoidance of "vague generalities however magnificent and sonorous," and its concentration, which "is the very essence of poetry." So closely indeed do these versions realise Imagist ideals that one wonders if all the pieces are from genuine originals.<sup>1</sup> Has Miss Lowell ventured into Levantine tongues that this flower should spring "from the Arabic":

A mole shows black  
Between her mouth and cheek,  
As if a negro,  
Coming into a garden,  
Wavered between a purple rose  
And a scarlet camomile.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His versions rest mainly on a collection of 140 lyrics, 73 of which he translates, made by M. Adolphe Thalasso for his *Revue Orientale*, Constantinople, the harvest of twenty years' study of Asian popular poetry, *Anthologie de l'Amour Asiatique* (1906). Without asking a work of erudition, one regrets that the English books lack the orderly and scholarly manner of the French. The modern matter from an Arabised Scot and an Americanised Chinese seems uncharacteristic and unworthy; and, though Mr. Mathers's paraphrase rarely exceeds a reasonable freedom, one is taken aback to find '*des lueurs des vers lussants*' appearing as '*the rolling and shining of love songs*.' The point of the Japanese 'pivot' poems is missed: cf. "Alone One Night" (*Garden of Bright Waters*, p. 82) with Aston, *Japanese Literature*, pp. 32, 33, 201, 202, or with C. H. Page, *Japanese Poetry*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> One quite refuses to believe that aught but the contemporary manner inspired stanzas ("From the modern Persian." *Garden of Bright Waters*, p. 92) whose picturesque ingenuity of phrasing has inevitableness for the ear rather than for the mind:

Then like a splash of saffron whey  
That spills from out a bogwood bowl  
Oozed from the mountain cleft the whole  
Rich and reluctant light of day.

And is the visual imagery of this picture that of Asia or of Aubrey Beardsley:

And here was handiwork of Crete  
And olives grew beside a stone  
And one slim phallos stood alone  
Blasphemed at by the paroquets.

Even the lyric of Western Asia is diffuse and given to conventional epithet and figure; it is therefore only by condensing or by rendering but a fragment of his original that Mr. Mathers attains an elliptical allusiveness characteristic of Chinese and Japanese poetry, but not of the more explicit Asian idioms. A famous distich of Sultan Selim the Grim reads in full:

Lions tremble under the talons of my valor; and heaven has subjected me to the gazelle eyes of my beloved.

This Mr. Mathers, knowing that poetry, like other magic, is a happy compound of silence and symbol, transmutes to

Lions tremble at my claws  
And I at a gazelle with eyes.

A popular song of Turkestan, diffuse, conventional, and extravagant, becomes, reduced and invigorated in phrase, this:

Not a stone from my black sling  
Ever misses anything  
But the arrows of your eye  
Surer shoot and faster fly.

Not one creature that I hit  
Lingers on to know of it;  
But the game that falls to love  
Lives and lingers long enough.

The last English line represents much in the original about "a thousand deaths without death." Shall we judge it a betrayal of the original, to reduce and invigorate? The doom awaiting literal versions would be to remain unread till the western reader should develop (if ever) the leisure of mind that accounts itself well occupied in an Epicurean savoring of even familiar imagery.

Both the Bacchic and the Priapic note in Asian poetry have been explained away as symbolism of philosophy or religion. The ancient *saké* lyrics of Japan are allegorized like the vinous verses of Omar. *Canticles* was admitted to the canon only as allegorically interpreted. But to the popular mind the

poetry of love is the poetry of love; and one hopes it is really the popular mind that inspired the malice of a lyric which Mr. Mathers attributes "to the Burmese":

The night before last night  
I heard that to make songs to girls  
And to make prayers to God  
Were of equal value in the eye of time;  
Provided, that is,  
That the prayers  
Are sufficiently beautiful.

### III

The poetry of Muslim Asia further treated love as religious allegory. Of this Fitzgerald himself translated an example, the Sufi mystic poem of *Salaman and Absal*. Such Sufi allegorizing dominated also the poetry of India written in Urdu, mainly by Muslim Indians. Many matters widely different, however, from love inspired poets Arabian, Persian, and Turkish. That, even after the *Rubaiyat*, interesting lyric verse awaits the translator is clear from the literary remains of Fitzgerald; didactic, satiric, or philosophic poetry may yet come into English like those fragments which he translated from the Persian *Parliament of Fowls* of the century preceding Chaucer's. Already the Muslim field has been laboriously exploited by erudition, but a translator must be awaited who is a poet, who can summon up something of the blithe independence of old Fitz himself, who wrote: "It is an amusement to me to take what liberties I like with these Persians; who (as I think) are not poets enough to frighten one from such excursions and who really do want a little art to shape them."

Meanwhile, English taste, in preparation for admission to the Gardens of Fragrance of Iran, may acquaint itself with the visible imagery of the Iranian genius. By the Paris exhibit of 1904 a European enthusiasm was stimulated for the Persian portrait drawings and book illustrations, which inspired charm-

ing developments in Western illustration, for example, in Mr. Edmund Dulac. Those Persian miniature flowerbeds of gorgeous color and elegant drawing should themselves become familiar to Americans, since the Golubew and the Ross-Coomaraswamy collections have assembled in Boston a wealth of the choicest examples in the world.

## IV

Of the Vedic hymns, which may be called the *Psalms* of classic Hindu religion, or of the later religious lyric none has entered English literature, though all the older orthodox and heretical religious poetry of Asia was introduced to the English reader in the great series of Sacred Books of the East begun in 1875 by the scholar-courtier F. Max Müller. From this its earliest poetry down to our day, the lyric of Hindustan has been chiefly religious, though, through the mediæval period, as in Islam, mystic and erotic in expression. The Sanskrit dialogue of lyrics, *Gita Govinda*, a twelfth-century parallel of *Canticles*, and, among the vernaculars, Hindi and Bengali erotic lyrics expressed especially Krishna worship. Of decorously selected portions of the *Govinda*, Sir Edwin Arnold made a now forgotten metrical version (1875); and of the Maithili Vaishnava poet, Vidyapati, Dr. Coomaraswamy prepared a scholarly version and comment; but until an Indianist appears with the singing power of Swinburne these lyrics are unlikely to find expression as English poetry.<sup>1</sup>

That intelligent Hindu thought considers the erotic element not merely symbol and allegory but psychologically essential in all this poetry may appear from such discussions as Dr. Coomaraswamy's on *Sahaja* and the poet Chandidas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coomaraswamy and Sen, *Vidyapati . . . Songs of the Loves of Radha and Krishna . . . with Introduction, notes, and illustrations from Indian paintings*. London, 1915. More recent, but less significant, Kumar, Datta, and Chapman, *Vaishnava Lyrics*. Oxford, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Tenth essay in *The Dance of Shiva* (1918).

European feeling has for a generation been accustomed to the conviction that the roots of passion and of adoration are so deeply intertwined in the subsoil of consciousness that there is not perhaps an essential antagonism between the mood which produces religious lyric and that which produces the poetry of passion. Religious effusion becomes occasionally ardent enough to sound passionate overtones, from the raptures of mediæval nuns down even to Christina Rossetti; but in these the element of sex, even if subliminally potent, does not rise into consciousness, never into the frank consciousness of the Indian erotic mood. Even if European feeling resents in no way the acknowledgment of a passionate basis in adoration, it is likely long to feel that the erotic element, the moment it rises into consciousness, becomes incongruous with religious expression. If to such reflections there be objected the *Song of Songs*, which is perhaps an example of Asian erotic religious lyric, it must be admitted that it is to most English readers a lovely yet alien thing, introduced by custom intimately into our culture, yet in its essential import ignored.

As in the case of Persia, the art of India may now be included within the scope of European appreciation, as a step toward understanding Indian literature. Rajput painting is almost explicitly illustrative of the religious lyric; the Boston collection has many examples of Vaishnava legendary art, some explicitly applied to the *Govinda*. But sympathy with the visible imagery of Indian feeling is probably generations away — farther than a similar education into the emotional background of China and Japan. Indian art has only begun to appear, in noble examples, in American museums, and is in many details the most alien of all the arts of Asia. In Buddhist legend Kantaka, the steed of Gautama, dies of grief when his master passes into Nirvana: this is within range of European sympathy because the horse has so long

been a creature of dignified and even poetic associations. In the Chadanta Jataka, on the other hand, a white elephant is an heroic exemplar of self-sacrifice in benevolently surrendering his tusks to the hunter: this is to Western feeling almost ludicrous, because, though his psychic qualities perhaps entirely equal those of the horse, the associations of the elephant are to our feeling more with the circus than with character. It is a grim truth that to Americans in general P. T. Barnum has been more than any other man the agent of contact with Indian civilization. The European reader, though his mind may accept Darwinian conceptions of the ultimate unity of all living forms, does not yet feel this truth, which the Buddhist accepts so that it is a real datum of poetic emotion.

If, however, the artistic expressions of Hinduism are "difficult" to European eyes, — its feminine type repellently exuberant, its architecture wearily lavish, its blue or many-limbed deities disconcerting, — yet Buddhism has produced a statuary whose nobility can not escape even an indifferent eye, unless that eye be darkened by such sectarianism as inspired a distinguished Anglican clergyman to declare that "though he could by an intellectual effort perceive dignity in them, his instinct as a Christian priest was to smash their smug faces." If such sorry and irritated provincialism may be mitigated by contact with Buddhist art and thoughtful comment such as Dr. Coomaraswamy's notable *Dance of Siva*, some literary expression of the profound poetry of Buddhism might follow.

As a system of metaphysics Buddhism is of course essentially non-poetic, but poetic charm as unmistakably saturates the historic and legendary record of Buddha as it does our gospels. Desire to know this poetry maintained in unaccountable popularity for a generation Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* (1879), a rather saccharine compound of Mahayana legend in undistinguished blank verse bristling with exotic words.

More really, if obscurely, significant is the persisting demand for such a book as Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (1896), still the best, and authentic, source for the English reader. Yet more attractive is the presentation of Buddhist feeling in the work of Lafcadio Hearn; for Hearn found in Buddhism views of life, implied in the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, then enjoying its greatest influence, but mellowed in the atmosphere of an ancient culture which had lived them instead of thinking them.

The religious mind of India a century ago made positive approach to Western thought in the modern non-denominational theist movement, the Brahma Samaj. Lyric expression of this most recent religious mood of Indianism appears in the verse of Rabindranath Tagore, son of the second leader of the Samaj. His poems in Bengali, the most distinguished contemporary Indian poetry, he himself turns into musical English prose. The prominence secured him by the Nobel award has led the Western reader to expect too much in his translated work, which seems marked by a diluted amiability rather than depth or originality of thought or feeling.<sup>x</sup> Yet *Gitanjali* (1909) is perhaps the only significant volume of religious lyric written in English in our day, akin in its mystic personifications to the older lyrics of Hinduism, but not erotic in expression, and sounding, if a tenuous, yet a vespertinal and authentic note of adoration.

## V

Of the brief Japanese verse forms, the sanctioned and classical *tanka* of five lines and thirty-one syllables, and our later *hokku* of three lines and seventeen syllables, our earlier scholars were contemptuous, believing them precluded by their very brevity "from being a vehicle for any but the

<sup>x</sup> Mr. E. J. Thompson's excellent little volume indicates how inadequately the Indian poet is represented in the English versions. (*Rabindranath Tagore*, pp. 45 ff.)

merest atoms of poetical thought and sentiment."<sup>1</sup> But upon the delicate taste of Lafcadio Hearn these lyrics, especially as vehicles of traditional popular sentiment, exercised the greatest charm and to them he devoted two essays in *Buddha Fields* (1897). Since, the *hokku* has returned to a considerable vogue, among both native and translating poets. The Anglo-Japanese Noguchi praises it in paradoxical rhapsodies and writes it both in English and Japanese. Our contemporary poets, especially the Imagists, valuing the gem-like brilliance of the short verse forms rather than the displayed splendor of longer poems, have felt similar fascination, and have imitated and translated the *hokku* as the most characteristic note of the people whose exquisite visible arts so frequently accomplish their miracles of observation and design within almost microscopic proportions.

Yet how render these extremely brief originals of but three or five lines, unrhymed, and observing only a syllabic pattern? Hearn's versions are unrhymed, approximating the classical elegiac distich, which has, as Chamberlain objects, something too much of "grand resonance." In so short a poem, rhyme is likely to lend a touch of epigrammatic smartness alien to the poignant concentration and simplicity of the original. Noguchi suggests that the English poem nearest in effect to a Japanese is Landor's "I strove with none . . .," the whole of which is like a *tanka*, and the closing lines of which alone might pass as a *hokku*:

I warmed both hands before the fire of life;  
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

<sup>1</sup> Aston, *Japanese Literature* (1899), p. 393. The patronizing discussions and the stilted versions of the scholars are chiefly in the publications of the Oriental societies. Professor B. H. Chamberlain reprinted in 1910 his more sympathetic notice, with versions, of Basho, the seventeenth-century master of *hokku*. Of Mr. W. N. Porter's charming little volumes, *A Hundred Verses from Old Japan* (1909, the translated *tanka* of the *Hiaku-nin-shishu*) is noticeably more stilted than the 365 *hokku* of *A Year of Japanese Epigrams* (1911). Professor C. H. Page's *Japanese Poetry* (1923) adds nothing to previous comment, but includes versions of poetic distinction.

It is interesting to put side by side versions of a famous *tanka*<sup>1</sup> from the most popular of Japanese anthologies, the thirteenth-century *Hiaku-nin-isshuu*, Thalasso renders it in equivalent syllables, Page in a deft rhymed verse

|                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sera-t-il constant            | How can one e'er be sure     |
| Son amour? Je ne sais pas     | If true love will endure?    |
| Mais, j'ai depuis l'aube,     | My thoughts this morning are |
| Du désordre en mes pensées    | As tangled as my hair        |
| Ainsi qu'en mes cheveux noirs |                              |

Such almost fragmentary forms may appear suited only to the tremulous incoherences of affection, but it is the distinction of Chinese and Japanese poetry that its range is rather wider than that of other Asian lands "It came about," said the Preface of the famous anthology, the *Kokinshuu* (c 922), "that our love of flowers, our worship of bird song, our sadness in watching the mists, our grief at sight of the dew, all the manifold moods of man's heart found expression in varying speech" How saturated these popular lyrics were with the gravely pathetic assumptions of Buddhism, Hearn's essay shows, and the mood developed especially by the Zen sect is voiced in a handful of tiny poems from many periods.<sup>2</sup> To the impassioned contemplation of Zen Buddhism the universe appears translucent — its present and visible phenomena dissolving, for the imagination, into a veil of mist beyond which the manifold Purpose gleams majestically dominant over the nearer scene. Thus to behold the daily scene under an aspect of eternity is the vision of all philosophic poetry; in the Japanese lyric the notable circumstance is that this majestic range ennobles such simple objects and finds expression in so brief a form A *tanka* in the *Manyoshuu* Professor Page renders\*

Wistaria pours at last its waves of bloom  
 Along the lintel of my door  
 Planted long since for joy when one should come  
 Who comes no more

\* No. 43

<sup>2</sup> This development in the visible arts is discussed in the third of Anesaki's lectures on *Buddhist Ideals in Japanese Art*

The rendering is a shade sentimentalized from the more reticent original as Aston gives it

The rippling wistaria that I planted by my house  
As a memento of thee whom I love, is at length in bloom

The Boston Museum has a fifteenth-century album of ideal portraits of the "Thirty-six Immortal Poets" <sup>1</sup> in which the likeness of the famous lady Komachi bears her *tanka*

In the world, 't is the heart, the flower of man,  
that fades unobserved

The *hokku*, least, and for a while least regarded, of these lyric forms, sometimes sounds the gravest note

Autumn, and a cricket's shell  
Beside it the dead cricket Well  
Life and fate

To this version of Professor Page a sensitive taste may prefer the almost stark austerity of the original as Chamberlain gives it

In autumn a cicada dead  
Beside the shell that it cast off

Earlier translations of the *hokku*, though often attaining ingenious brevity, too often seem childlike or even "cunning"; to achieve reserved force and something of the poignancy of the "lyric cry" is the aim and occasionally the attainment of later translators A tenth-century poetess, at death, addressed to the beloved a *tanka* <sup>2</sup> thus rendered by Porter.

My life is drawing to a close  
I cannot longer stay,  
A pleasant memory of thee  
I fain would take away,  
So visit me, I pray

As compared with the perfunctory note of that, Mr. Mathers' version seems impassioned

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced entirely, with an introduction and versions by Mr. K. Tomita in the Museum Bulletin, February, 1921

<sup>2</sup> No. 56 in the *Haiku-nin-shu*, also in Thalasso, 246, Mathers, *Coloured Stars*, 42, Page, 60

One more time  
 Before I quit the world  
 I want to see you,  
 To carry with me down there  
 Your face of love, O my love

For profound poetic feeling it may be that one must turn not to translation but to the original verse of a poet who knows and is influenced by the foreign poetry but does not translate it. Such may be found in an insufficiently appreciated achievement of American verse, the brief series of *Cinquains* (1911-1913) by Miss Adelaide Crapsey, whose impressive erudition in metrics included the Japanese field. A tenth-century poet is represented in the *Haiku* by a *tanka* thus rendered by Porter

I hate the cold unfriendly moon  
 That shines at early morn  
 And nothing seems so sad and gray  
 When I am left forlorn  
 As day's returning dawn

That is the unimpassioned equivalent of the cinquain, *Anguish*

Keep thou  
 Thy tearless watch  
 All night, but when blue-dawn  
 Breathes on the silver moon, then weep!  
 Then weep!

That the power and grace of the Japanese forms, with all their deft and passionate brevity, may be attained in these lyrics of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 1 accents in their total of five lines, any English reader may discover from the manly and sonorous *By Zeus*, on the Grand Canyon, or from the caressing gentleness of *The Guarded Wound*<sup>z</sup>

## VI

Translations of Chinese verse previous to 1910 were exercises of sinologues, not English poetry. Poets, however, of the earlier period of "free verse," in a mood common to experimenters, turned to the exotic East for material

<sup>z</sup> Crapsey, *Verse* (1922) pp 40, 54

A few Chinese poems in Mr Mathers' booklets are in cadenced verse, and this is the form adopted by three translators who immediately followed, translators who themselves command or by a collaborator have access to the original: Mr Waley, *170 Poems and More Translations* (1919), Mrs Ayscough and Miss Lowell, *Fir Flower Tablets* (1920), and Mr Obata, *Li-Po* (1922).

Two misgivings arise in regard to the adequacy of cadenced verse as a vehicle for translation from Chinese — it is not a clear-cut or memorable form which, like the Omar stanza, might easily pass into popularity, even into familiar quotation; and the material it is expected to represent is the farthest from "free" — a poetry based on a rigidly exacting metrical arrangement, involving rhyme, number of syllables, and alternation of "flat" and "deflected" tones, or inflections. The element of pattern is, one supposes, almost geometrically pronounced to Chinese feeling, though the ideas have nothing like the same patterned grouping, since such logical antithesis as occurs seems intentionally vague.<sup>1</sup> If translation retains the implicit and diffused quality of this subdued expression, what, in the absence of that orderliness so essential in the original, will secure to it what Henry James calls "the decency of the definite"? The subtle and moody suggestiveness of thought or feeling in a Rossetti sonnet, — the *Dark Glass* or the *Monochord*, — is delightful because its vaporous matter is contained in a chalice wrought to so precise and symmetrical a design. Would not these poems largely evaporate if poured out in the cadences of "free" verse? One may similarly question if the subtle hues of the Chinese picture do not become too evanescent, deprived of the decorative limitation of fixed pattern.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Fletcher in an interesting review of Miss Lowell's volume in the *Dial*, February, 1920, notes a subtle antithesis which he feels is the structure of all the Chinese poems, but I fail to find it in many.

Still, to have no effect of pattern is better than to have pattern whose suggestion is wholly wrong Mr. Giles often uses a metre so little subtle as to suggest "Young Lochinvar has come out of the west," a brisk anapestic pace which is the very butter woman's trot to market In four versions of Li-Po's famous *Drinking Alone in the Moonlight*<sup>1</sup> the variation in metrical mood may be observed the note of decorum which in Mr Waley condescends to oddity, is just touched in Miss Lowell's verse with whimsicality, in Mr Obata the animation becomes convivial, but Mr Giles's anapests send it off into the mirthless rattle of the vaudeville stage

Cadenced verse may at least, then, claim to avoid inappropriate notes In a second respect the manner of the newer poetry gains in appropriateness The style of the Chinese poem appears suggestive rather than explicit: it names, with a characterizing attribute or two, objects seen, felt, heard, or even smelled and leaves to the reader formulation of his emotional response It mentions, for instance, two objects necessary for a poetic figure but refrains from expressing the simile — an allusiveness of manner quite congenial to the modes of the newer poets Mr Giles by explicitness reduces almost to commonplace a famous poem by a contemporary of King Alfred, on the *Virtuous Wife*<sup>2</sup>

Knowing, fair sir, my matrimonial thrall,  
 Two pearls thou sentest me, costly withal  
 And I seeing that love thy heart possessed,  
 I wrapped them coldly in my silken vest  
 For mine is a household of high degree,  
 My husband captain in the King's army,  
 And one with wit like thine should say,  
 'The troth of wives is forever and aye'  
 With thy two pearls I send thee back two tears,  
 Tears that we did not meet in earlier years

<sup>1</sup> Waley, *More Translations*, 27, Lowell, 39, Obata, 83, Giles, 153 The metrical reflex on the dainty and childlike exuberance of the *Palace Pleasures* may likewise be observed in three renderings Lowell, 12, Obata, 79, Giles, 152

<sup>2</sup> *Chinese Literature*, 176

Ignoring the banality of phrase in this, one can perceive that there is metrical gain in Mr Mathers' version,<sup>1</sup> which cuts away material recorded perhaps even in an ideographic language but which is, in its elliptical reticence, more like other Chinese verse.

One moment I place your two bright pearls against my robe,  
and the red silk mirrors a rose in each  
Why did I not meet you before I married?  
See, there are two tears quivering at my lids,  
I am giving you back your pearls

No less difficult than the problem of metre is that of phrasing. How explicitly shall one phrase a similitude merely hinted in the original?<sup>2</sup> Here are three versions of Li-Po's *In the Mountains*.<sup>3</sup> Mr Obata does not seem even to juxtapose the elements of the simile

Why do I live among the green mountains?  
I laugh and answer not, my soul is serene  
It dwells in another heaven and earth belonging to no man  
The peach trees are in flower and the water flows on

The figurative parallel is faintly mirrored in Miss Lowell's poem, *Reply to an unrefined person encountered in the hills*

He asks why I perch in the green jade hills  
I smile and do not answer My heart is comfortable and at peace  
Fallen peachflowers spread out widely, widely over the water  
It is another sky and earth, not the world of man

The resplendent unreality of blossom suspended between a real and a mirrored sky is made rather too explicit by Giles:

You ask what my soul does away in the sky,  
I inwardly smile but I cannot reply  
Like peachblossoms carried away by the stream  
I soar to a world of which you cannot dream

Further, of the Chinese ideogram shall one translate the commonest and most familiar prosaic significance, the meaning which that image would suggest to the average unpoetic

<sup>1</sup> *Garden of Bright Waters*, 71 (shortened from Thalasso, 165)

<sup>2</sup> Obata, 71, Lowell, 69, Giles, 155

reader, or seek in the image unusual suggestive notions where-with to work a sort of poetic embroidery on the Chinese theme? Shall one translate the word or the word and its connotations? Half of poetic effect lies in connotation, but how many are the possible connotations of an image? The modern translators, Miss Lowell especially, to whom the commonplace or familiar is above all else anathema, have sought the exceptional, the unexpected, and always the specific and concrete. The ideogram which to Mr. Waley means the fish's "native pool" becomes for Miss Lowell "the whirled water of meeting streams", to him "field and garden" represent characters which to her image "the square enclosures of my field and my walled garden with its quiet paths". One wonders if the original always indicates some of the happy specificness of the Imagist translator. "Wild bamboos *slit* the blue green of the sky"; "The late autumn moon *shivers* along the little ripples", "A broken sunlight *quavers* over the southern porch." Sometimes the term seems an intrusion of the wilfully *recherché*. "The writing of Li Po-hai has the wide swiftness of wind" Mr. Chang says<sup>1</sup> that the ingenuity of the English translators often misrepresents the simple naturalness of the original to Chinese feeling the supreme poetic quality would seem to be that of securing from familiar material music and beauty Shelley's semichorus, "Life may change . . ." in the *Revolt of Hellas* contains not a word that your Imagist poet would not shun as commonplace, but it is one of the singing glories of English verse.

"The word or the word and its connotations"? Or even a quite different word with the same connotations? Shall the English poem bloom with the *lan* (and refer the reader to an identifying footnote), or the 'epidendrum,' or the 'Spear orchid'? Mr. Waley gives a haunting verse, a famous ancient

<sup>1</sup> Hsin-Hai Chang, *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1922.

dirge sung at the burial of kings and princes, much like the Coronach in *The Lady of the Lake*

How swiftly it dries,  
The dew on the garlic leaf  
The dew that dries so fast  
To-morrow will fall again  
But he whom we carry to the grave  
Will nevermore return

Can the poetic mood survive the introduction of garlic? The alternative is to omit specific reference and mention only *the dew on the leaf*, or substitute a different leaf with poetic associations of transitory fame, *the dew on the laurel*. The modern translators have taken on the whole the heroic course of sticking to their text, which must remain "queer" and unpoetic until the familiarity of many generations may obliterate the queerness and throw poetic associations about the word now only exact or scientific.

What other course is possible with place names? Not one of the strange syllables of Chinese geography has for us any connotation whatever save oddity. Ludlow and Wenlock almost instantly assume grave or lovely associations though one knows actually not a place in Shropshire. Naishapur has won its poetic aura. To other generations there may arise a dim splendor of association in the simplest line of Chinese verse. "The moon above the palace of Han and above the land of Chin."

For only as one knows the same world of visual or audible impressions that form the mentality of the poet will his words evoke that echoing resonance of overtones which constitutes more than half the eloquence of poetry. Till readers know the names of Chinese geography or history and the fauna and flora familiarly, so that they do not seem terms of the sinologue; still more, until he commands a visual image of their landscape, beasts, and vegetation, Chinese poetry can hardly be rendered into English. The verses of Li-Po are full of the

awe of cloud-crowned mountains overhanging sheer ravines and of the grateful solemnity and loneliness of mountain outlooks. For all this the fit preparation is acquaintance with the mystic Sung landscape painting, precious examples of which may be seen in the museums of a land fortunate enough to include among its citizens Weld and Fenollosa and Mr Charles Freer. The older poetry of the Celestial Empire is filled with the alarms of war and peopled with war horses.<sup>1</sup> For the ultimate service of poetic rendering that Mongolian beastie is beginning to have reality for us, quite positive historic solidity and significance, such as was indicated in the most suggestive chapter of the Cambridge Mediæval History.<sup>2</sup> The image of him, too, is becoming clearer. To the Kouyunjik reliefs, on which the splendor of the war horse of the book of Job is made visible, and to those spirited heads that rear their roached manes from the angles of the Parthenon pediments we now add as the third really great visual realisation of the horse those sturdy and rotund Mongolian mounts incised in the slate reliefs of the T'ang dynasty.<sup>3</sup> The imagery that fills Chinese poems with jade palaces and jade mountains and waters and jade sky ought not, to a nation that may see the Bishop jades in New York, finally to remain alien.

<sup>1</sup> Their neighing is a part of the imitative description of the old poets, a sound which has defied transliteration into the language of any land, even Gulliver's. Miss Lowell's beast appears to sneeze "Hsiao, hsiao, the horse neighs", which Mr Obata discreetly renders "Our horses neigh softly, softly".

<sup>2</sup> Vol I, Chap xii. Peisker, *The Asiatic Background*

<sup>3</sup> The same equine type appears in the Han slates (an example of which may be seen in Boston) but the most beautiful is the memorial stone erected by the founder of the T'ang (7th century) in honor of six steeds who carried him to various victories, with their names, and their arrow wounds recorded. See Bushell, *Chinese Art*, I, p 33 and Fig 18

## **LYRIC POETRY**



## LYRIC POETRY

By HAROLD DEWOLF FULLER

LYRIC poetry has in large measure been spared from the blight of over-zealous scholarship by the difficulty to define it. There used to be a legend at a certain university that only two beings in the world knew what lyric poetry was, God and Professor —, and that God would n't tell, and Professor — could n't tell. Other forms of literature have been searched and classified according to the well-known prescription for the study of types. But the lyric has presented a smiling defiance to such treatment. It has a piquant quality like life itself, springing up where least expected, a flower in a cranny. Formerly it was thought sufficient to divide poetry into epic, dramatic, and lyric. What was not the first two was, generally speaking, the last. This was a good enough working basis.

Recently scholars have taken to looking at the lyric more narrowly. Professor E. B. Reed gives the following definition: "All songs, all poems following classic lyric forms, all short poems expressing the writer's moods and feelings in rhythm that suggests music, are to be considered lyrics." Difficulty arose when Professor Reed attempted to enforce his tests. He accepted sonnets because some of them, notably in the days of Elizabeth, have been set to music, yet Wordsworth's genius was styled unlyrical because "he has not left us a single song." And the book shows many other curious instances of selection and exclusion. Professor F. E. Schelling's volume on "The English Lyric" adds nothing new to the foregoing statements. "The primary conception involved in the term 'lyric,'" he says, "has always to do with song, and it is the song-like

quality of the lyric that falls most conspicuously into contrast with the epic or telling quality of narrative verse So, too, the lyric is concerned with the poet, his thoughts, his emotions, his moods, and his passions With the lyric subjective poetry begins The latest to match his skill with this elusive type is Mr Ernest Rhys,<sup>1</sup> the editor of Everyman's Library. "Lyrical, it may be said, implies a form of musical utterance in words governed by overmastering emotion and set free by a powerfully concordant rhythm So soon as narrator or playwright, carried out of the given medium of personal feeling, begins to dilate individually on the theme, that moment he or she surely tends to grow lyrical " The musical test, it will be noted, is abandoned in the second sentence, where Mr Rhys applies his definition, and, unless one must infer that personal feeling in verse inevitably draws upon music, it is of little practical use. The looseness of Mr Rhys's conception is quite typical of his practice Beginning with early forms which were certainly sung, he later accepts sonnets and certain dramatic soliloquies, but as if feeling guilty over his small use of the musical requirement, he periodically refers to an underlying "singing mode," "singing idiom," or "hidden note " The early portion of the volume has to do with metrical developments, especially the transition from alliterative verse to rhyming schemes, and with the flexibility bestowed on English poetry by borrowings from the French. As the book progresses, its treatment may be described as scarcely more than literary history

## I

I have no desire to hazard a new definition but merely wish to consider whether the scope of lyric poetry is not immensely different from that usually assigned to it All may admit that the lyric and song originated in much the same impulse—

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Rhys, *Lyric Poetry*.

the desire to express personal, often inarticulate, feeling, and that the two may at times still be closely allied. It would require no magic rod to strike a gush of song from the lyrics of Burns, or from the light stanzas scattered through Shakespeare's dramas, even if the particular airs to which they were set had been forgotten. But this is very different from implying such an accompaniment for all pieces that commonly pass as lyrics. The discussion will be forwarded by a glance at certain developments in music itself. Such is its present state that critics would probably be as perplexed to agree on what is meant by "lyric" in music as others are to say what the word conveys as regards verse. Whereas formerly lyric music must above all else have melody, some composers, notably Debussy, are now depending instead on harmony, coloring. When he wishes to describe the play of moonlight on the water, Debussy resorts to a series of tinkles broken by syncopated glissandos and mingled with something like whispers. His "*Reflet dans l'eau*" shows an entirely different treatment from Nevin's woodland sketches. Both men have essayed to speak for nature. The latter has made her tuneful, and in any age would be accounted a true lyrist. Debussy, accepting certain features of nature as in themselves the embodiment of lyric sentiment, has been content to decorate, to sophisticate. He has replaced melody — one of the traditional marks of the lyric — by dexterous harmony, and through this "programme" variety of music has carried the lyric into close association with other musical types.

Manifestly, then, those critics who stick for a musical basis of the lyric should distinguish the kind of music meant. "*Lycidas*" suggests music no more strongly than many portions of "*Paradise Lost*," or, if so, does not recall the pure melodies which critics would still unite in terming lyrical. Nor can much significance be extracted from the fact that the sonnet owes its form to a combination of stanzas which usually

went with song, or that in some instances the sonnet itself has received a musical arrangement. Certainly within the last three centuries composers of sonnets could never have had the thought of music in mind, and only such supersensitive ears as Mr. Rhys's could possibly discover a "hidden note" of song at the bottom of, say, Shakespeare's lines beginning

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments

If they convey any note, it is Milton's epic organ tone. One might go further and say that they are less lyrical as regards pure sound than Macbeth's memorable lament after hearing that his wife is dead. If by "musical basis" critics would mean melodious song, they would have little difficulty in classification, though this would exclude the majority of selections found in the "Golden Treasury."

In endeavoring to hold to a conception of the ancient Greeks we have really confused their ideas. They recognized the kinship of the lyric and song, though they did not use it as a strict test, but also the more general relation of poetry and music. If lyric verse was sung, so were the epic and large portions of the drama, and the instrument of accompaniment might, at least in the first two instances, be the same, the lyre. Yet it is true that to most minds to-day the lyric appears to have a prior claim to a musical alliance. Partly this is because it is the only one of the three poetic divisions which continues to be set to music — a thoroughly arbitrary distinction. But more especially it is because the beginnings of poetry, like the beginnings of music, were "lyrical," in the sense that they fell easily into the jingle of song. This must have been the reason for the style, "lyric Apollo," to characterize the god of poetry and music, who was rooted in their ancient traditions. And down the centuries lyric verse and lyric music have furnished enough examples of early uncomplicated melo-

dies to keep the two, in human instincts, subtly bound together "O my luve's like, a red, red rose" has not advanced far in rhythm beyond poetry, in an elementary stage, which, of course, only heightens its homely freshness The movement of Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" has no such implication, and though it might set an ancient Greek to chanting, it does not so affect us moderns In retaining, despite the inconsistencies of our practice, a musical basis exclusively for the lyric, we are but emphasizing the stream of, as it were, primordial poetry which still runs through it, though it also runs through the drama and epic in less degree It is heard now and again in "Samson Agonistes" and in Homer's episode of Nausicaa

## II

I have referred to a present tendency in lyrical music to replace melody by skilful harmony playing over choice aspects of nature Something much akin to this has long been operative in lyric poetry Off-hand one would not think of turning to Petrarch for an illustration Coming on the heels of the troubadours, whose songs he laid under heavy contribution, he would surely seem to give the strongest reinforcement to the musical test Nearly always there is music in his language, and some of his stanzas were obviously intended to be sung But here again the test is not decisive, for his sonnets are no more melodious than parts of Chaucer's narrative, such as the lines

And smale foules maken melodye  
That slepen al the night with open eye,

or than much of the "Divine Comedy" In the hands of all three authors poetry of whatever type still betrayed its twin-birth with music

Petrarch's greatest influence on others came undoubtedly from his peculiar use of nature It was not original with him, but his expertness gave it the widest currency, and then and

there created the nature cult which still has adherents In illustrating his love for Laura he connected her with nature's treasury Her curls were tossed by the gentlest breeze, the laurel was instinct with her presence, the stars gained in lustre by resembling her eyes, her footsteps consecrated the meadows, the flowers that brushed her were an inspiration henceforth, and a stream once visited by her thereafter murmured music Sappho had furnished charming natural settings, but it was left to Petrarch to bring nature and love into fusion French and English caught up his manner until no mistress was worthy if unattended by nature's store of tenderest fragrances, colors, and sounds The insincerity of many of these writers does not remove the fact that nature was then made an almost indispensable accompaniment of what passed as lyric poetry The thought of music might be absent from the poet, but nature must in some fashion serve him. From continual use in this way certain natural features came to have an almost independent lyric value, especially the stars, the dawn, a stream, and flowers Though the vogue of flower poems, such as Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton yielded to, was enhanced by a special sentiment which each flower acquired, their main effect was the sheer beauty bestowed by long lyric associations And in a more general way Spenser and later Thomson were content to rest the value of whole lyric stanzas upon a lovely array of sweet natural details

Nor has the practice been neglected by more modern writers In the case of "Fiona Macleod" it attained the proportions of a naturalistic *rêve* Individual details of nature had received from centuries of poetic use (so we may suppose he felt) such an accumulation of emotional value that merely to pronounce their names was enough to furnish a lyric background, much after the manner of any catalogue of ships which, ever since Homer's famous list, has been apt to start in the mind a reminiscence of epic poetry. In not a few of his

poems William Sharp gives little more than an enumeration of these alleged lyric features, as in the following lines

There is in everything an undertone  
 Those clear in soul are also clear in sight,  
 And recognize in a white cascade's flash  
 The roar of mountain torrents, and the wail  
 Of multitudinous waves on barren sands,  
 The song of skylark at the flush of dawn,  
 A mayfield all ablaze with king-cups gold,  
 The clamour musical of culver wings  
 Beating the soft air of a dewy dusk,  
 The crescent moon far voyaging thro' darked skies,  
 And Sirius throbbing in the distant south,  
 A something deeper than mere audible  
 And visible sensations

Sharp's tendency — which is shared by many, among them Maeterlinck, I suspect — to see a "rainbow of feeling" in any nosegay of nature is most similar, it must be admitted, to Debussy's way of imputing subtle, fleeting emotions to his formless chromatics I have pursued this speculation to illustrate the danger of exalting a poetical accompaniment, whether it be song or nature, to a test of type

### III

The other test usually employed to mark off lyric poetry is personal, subjective emotion Like many other words that come trippingly from the tongue, these are meaningless unless strictly interpreted Taken to signify merely the language of feeling, as they generally are, they lead nowhere Is Horace's pleasant quarrel with Lydia, is many a pretty trifle by Austin Dobson, subjective emotion simply because both poets have used words of the heart? Was Robert Herrick subjective when he chaffered in the conventional conceits of his day? Are we to ignore the fact that the troubadours had a special motive for proclaiming a Blanche or a Diana to be a nonpareil? And there is the whole class of so-called lyrics

which retouch ancient mythology, such as the Anacreontic of Cupid stung by a bee, whose sentiments are artificial by the nature of the case Are they, too, subjective? But even when held to denote the poet's expression of his own sincere feeling, as I construe it, the subjective test furnishes no simple rule of thumb, for how shall we be sure when a poet is feigning?

There is, for instance, the sonnet sequence of Thomas Watson, which he openly declared to be merely an exercise in a fashion of the day Now, oddly enough, it sounds in parts not less sincere than similar works of his time. and probably other writers, if pressed, would have had to confess that they, too, were merely playing at a game Nor is it reasonable to accept, as Professor Reed would do, a sonnet as being necessarily a truer chart of an author's own sentiments than are various lines in a play If there was a Dark Lady, who shall say that the views on life and death in "Hamlet" were not in part the poet's own? If there is a ring of sincerity in the lines of Sonnet LIV

O! how much more doth beauty beauteous seem  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!  
it appears to be present also in.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will

In attempting to reach a man through his works one has to penetrate the veil of art, whatever the form of the poem chosen In any case, the author reacts *poetically* upon a given theme or situation, and unless the poetical equation is clearly understood, a critic would be rash to say that here the poet's heart lies bare Take an individual sonnet unconnected with a sequence or a literary vogue. Its metrical arrangement, especially in the Italian form, and its requirements of balance, climax, and point are too complex, within such small compass, to be adjusted readily to a poet's feeling without causing some

sacrifice to art Milton, determined to speak his mind on the atrocity at Piemont, in the sonnet commencing

Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints,

almost broke down the sonnet structure, employing a loose construction suggestive of Biblical utterance Even while we marvel at the happy result, the impression obtrudes that here the art of the sonnet received the smallest toll on record In some other sonnets, Milton, supreme poet that he was, so mastered the medium he worked in as to make his perceptions seem spontaneous, and Keats undoubtedly had similar success But this does not mean that the poetical equation is not present for the critic to solve

The mechanism of a sonnet may be thought of as an alembic which distils a poet's sentiments Its effect is too subtle to be often detected by the critic Yet any one who has written a sonnet (as who has n't?) realizes that the mood in the finished product is apt to differ from the original conception, and that the transforming power of art is operative when least we think of it The predicament of the lyrist who would be sincere may be illustrated by a modern tendency in the drama The desire to represent life on the stage exactly as it is brings the finicky realist face to face with certain insurmountable conditions of dramatic construction There is the element of time Try as he will, he cannot make the stage square with life Crises do not form with the celerity of stage convention, and in numerous other respects the dramatist of things as they are has to admit himself balked

This directing power of artistic form increases, naturally, according to the intricacy of the type used. A drama or epic may impose a large number of external conditions, and quite conceal the author's own feelings They are there, nevertheless, and could be sifted out if the laws of artistic construction were accurately known. By contrast, the lyric in general puts few restraints upon the poet Particularly in open stanzas he

would seem to have a good chance to express his very self. The language of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is so simple and direct as to leave no doubt that it came straight from the heart. But between the extremes represented by this poem and by such an impersonal performance as an *Æschylean* play the degree of subjectivity varies so much, whatever the literary form, as to make personal feeling a tricky test of type. It is hard, for instance, to imagine Wordsworth concealing his own feeling even in a drama. And Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" is in many portions as close an index of his feeling as is his simplest lyric.

## IV

Francis Palgrave, searching for a principle of selection for his "Golden Treasury," held the term lyrical "to imply that each poem shall turn upon a single thought, feeling, or situation." He ignored the tests of music and personal emotion and included in his collection eminent poems of supposedly single and continuous inspiration, in a word, all varieties of relatively short poems. The soundness of his definition might be disputed on the ground that, Poe's well-known views notwithstanding, "Paradise Lost" is the embodiment of but a single mood, albeit a huge mood. Yet if slightly arbitrary, Palgrave's distinction, which is based mainly on extent rather than on kind, is immensely convenient in practice, and I know of no other which would be usable for an anthology.

Looked at in the light of what has been said, the poems in Palgrave's collection show, it is true, certain characteristics which grow out of their brevity. Admitting that even a small structure, like a sonnet, has its artistic alchemy, it naturally lacks the resources of poetic works of considerable compass. Why is it, for instance, that Desdemona's simple utterance, "If you say so, I hope you will not kill me," is supreme poetry? It is because these prosaic words are released from a situation

which has been long preparing and which in itself is surcharged with imagination Not being included in a plot, the lyric as defined by Palgrave must depend much upon its surface value — upon graceful conceits, poignant turns of thought, choice of detail, and the piquancy of its seeming artlessness It obviously has not the artistic framework to support any large measure of sentences which, save for the metre, are prose So no one can conceive of a short poem including the following passage from "All's Well that Ends Well".

O! were that all I think not on my father,  
And these great tears grace his remembrance more  
Than those I shed for him What was he like?  
I have forgot him my imagination  
Carries no favour in 't but Bertram's  
I am undone there is no living, none,  
If Bertram be away

Yet in their proper place in the play these lines are effective Not that the short lyric's appeal is always superficial Though superficial in artistry, it has in general been occupied with ideas and feelings as old and deeply planted as life itself Thus the simple line, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," symbolizes a fundamental tragedy And only the slightest poetic heightening is absolutely required when the theme is a lyric standby, owing to the carrying power of the implicit sentiment

But richness of surface, though usually an essential of the short poem, is not a safe distinction Poets like Shelley would never have been satisfied, even when writing drama, with anything less than a succession of individually glowing lines, and Milton and Shakespeare, while not given to Shelley's excess of fancy, resorted to figures in many instances where another might have used plain, dignified language, trusting to the poetic structure to carry it Shakespeare has, indeed, many passages in his plays which bear a striking resemblance to poems generally accepted as lyric Take Macbeth's lament, previously referred to

She should have died hereafter,  
 There would have been time for such a word  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing

Is this less "lyric" in effect than the following lines of similar content in Pindar's eighth Pythian Ode?

In a little moment growtheth up the delight of men, yea and in like sort  
 falleth it to the ground, when a doom adverse hath shaken it

Things of a day — what are we, and what not? Man is as a dream of  
 shadows

Even if we were to go back to the test of subjective emotion, Macbeth's words would still qualify as lyric The sharp situation in which they are uttered makes them appear to be entirely the expression of personal feeling

It is quite possible that the lyric, except in Palgrave's practical use of the term, means little more than a poetic quality It comes close to signifying what is conveyed by the vague phrase "pure poetry" That is to say, when poetry is manifestly functioning effectively — namely, distinguishing itself from prose — it is lyric This condition is not prescribed necessarily by brevity, though it is obviously more difficult to sustain poetry at great length On the other hand, a plot may at times furnish a lyric, or poetic, intensity hard to attain in a short poem Shakespeare and Milton, superb poets that they were, contrived to be almost constantly lyric even while they were, respectively, dramatic and epic.

## V

There is lyric form — in Palgrave's sense of a relatively short poem — on the whole a natural distinction, since it describes a large body of poetic practice. And there is lyric sentiment, or coloring. The latter is so bound up with the very nature of poetry that to isolate it is impossible.

Some such discussion of the lyric as I have attempted here ought, if pursued further, to clarify opinions as to poetry in general. Too often the complaint has been made that Pope, for example, was not a true poet because he employed to so great an extent the language of reason. In the first place, it would be well for his critics to define this term "reason", and, secondly, to consider passages of his, not as detached units, but as portions of large structures whose artistic effect Pope relied upon very much. An examination of this kind would greatly discredit the study of poetry *in vacuo* and the tendency to overprize, especially in long poems, a glut of romantic imagery.



## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN



## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

By HENRY GODDARD LEACH

RETURNING to Harvard one autumn as a young instructor to assist Mr Wendell in Comparative Literature I, I was sauntering down Mount Auburn street trying to look the full importance of my new office, when I was summarily arrested by a squad of exuberant sophomores, impressed only by my youth. One of them held before my eyes a religious emblem, not a crucifix but a dainty waxen doll provided with wings, angel's wings, and bearing a striking resemblance to Miss Maude Adams's Peter Pan. The other sophomores in an anxious but imperious chorus put to me the question, "Do you believe in fairies?"

Needless to say I became an easy proselyte.

The human mind of all ages, when relieved of its critical faculties, the folk mind, has believed implicitly in fairies. If science succeeds in eliminating these shy co-inhabitants of our world the human imagination will suffer keenly from the withdrawal of its age-long solace. It may find new stimuli in the performance of the electrons or the feeble voices cajoled out of the ether by Sir Oliver Lodge, but there is an arid lack of color and companionship about these new friends of man.

As children most of us have succumbed to the spell of the fair ladies and gentlemen of the other-world, whether in the thrice told tales of Andrew Lang, in Grimm's Marchen, or in those stories of the world's greatest teller of fairy tales, that Danish writer whose work has been translated into every civilized tongue. This need be no cause for shame. Even in the ancient classics, canon of sane, orthodox humanism and common sense, we encounter the sea-creature, bright-eyed Thetis, who bore

Peleus's son, Achilles, swift of foot We have all enjoyed amid "the surge and thunder of the *Odyssey*" those pleasant breathing spaces in his salty voyages when Odysseus tarries to hold sweet converse for a while with some sea-nymph His sojourn on Calypso's isle has recently been celebrated in dramatic form by an English poet, Stephen Phillips These ladies and gentlemen of the deep were invoked even by a stern Puritan poet, Milton, in his fairy masque *Comus*

Sabrina fair, listen where thou art sitting  
Under the glassy cool translucent wave

Since Milton's time, the new scholarship of Grundtvig and Child and Kittredge has taken under its stern editorial patronage the thesaurus of mediæval fairydom in ballad and romance One quest in particular has provoked the ardor and competition of our young American doctors of the Science of Modern Languages, that is the pursuit of the theme of the fairy mistress and the fairy lover This curiosity has been fanned to fever heat by the publication from year to year of the old Irish sagas To these studies, too, Matthew Arnold's essay on Celtic literature has been a stimulus. The Celtic imagination, even to-day unusually buoyant, ran quite away with itself in the Middle Ages, and few love stories were complete without the intervention of a half-mortal personage of super-mortal power and attraction It will be remembered that the fifth of the eight races which invaded ancient Ireland were the Tuatha de Danaan, who came in the year of the world 3303 (pre-Darwinian count) or about two and a half centuries before the Irish These people were cunning magicians, and when at length they were conquered by the more politically minded Irish they retired into the recesses of wild nature and became gods and meddling fairies The Irish hills and the Gaelic seas were as full of fair ladies as the tempestuous waters of the *Odyssey*. There is a whole cycle of sagas about voyages among them, called the *Inrama*, of which

Tennyson's *Voyage of Maelduin* is a recollection Fortunate or unfortunate, as you please, was the Irish hero who was spirited away by some lovely creature, to dwell a prisoner in hill or isle, or even at the bottom of the sea. It was a lady of arrestive eye who lured Connla the fair-haired overseas to dwell with her on that blessed island of Moy Mell. On another occasion the over-king of Erin, Eochaid, saw by the edge of a well a woman with a bright silver comb adorned with gold, washing in a silver basin wherein were golden birds. "Etain am I," she said, "Daughter of Etar, King of the Cavalcade from the Elf Mound. I have been here twenty years, since I was born in an elf mound, awaiting for you, my lover." What orthodox Irish tradition did not know about such adventures Irish imagination was quite capable of inventing.

These glancing folk of the "Land of the Heart's Desire" offer a welcome narcotic for the red-eyed reason of our own day. Their lure has turned many a young American philologist from the straight path of Homer and Aristotle and the contemplation of Tennyson and Browning to mount behind the witch on her broomstick and to chase a fairy mistress through the Celtic moonlight.

In British folklore, too, the fairy mistress has often appeared. Take the Scottish ballad of Thomas Rhymer and the Queen of Elfland whom he mistook for the Virgin:

The lady rode, true Thomas ran  
Until they came to a water wan,  
Oh, it was night, and nae delight,  
And Thomas wade aboon the knee

It was dark night, and nae starn-light  
And on they waded o'lang days three  
And they heard the roaring o' a flood  
And Thomas a waefou man was he

Connected by many ramifications with all the lore of fairy mistresses, mermaids, and mermen, is Matthew Arnold's poem, *The Forsaken Merman*, published in the flush of his young man-

hood in 1849 Like some of Sappho's fragments in the Greek, it is one of the few perfect poems in the English language At first thought the romantic theme of other-world love could not have had a more unsympathetic artist than Matthew Arnold, a man of humanistic training and exacting critical judgment, a poet to consort with a classical muse or the genius of melancholia, but not to take chances with an illusive merman Arnold, apparently, like Milton and other rational minds, believed in fairies The poem is another proof of the permanence of the sea creatures in artistic convention and in popular belief

The poem is a monologue on the part of the forsaken husband, who is represented as appearing in the surf off a white-walled town on the coast of England, surrounded by his children, whom he bids follow him motherless back to their home at the bottom of the sea His lament gives snatches of his story Margaret the mother, had been the Merman's contented and faithful wife in their vaulted home in the sea, until one day down through the water penetrated the sound of a far-off church bell Thereat the wife sighed and said that she must go back to pray with her kinsfolk in the little gray church at Easter time He told her lovingly to go, but bade her to return They waited, the mother did not come back, the father and children in anxiety rose through the surf, went up the beach to the white-walled town, to the churchyard where they clambered over the graves. Through the panes they gazed up the aisle and saw where she sat by the church pillar The Merman called for her, "Margaret, come hither," but she gave them never a nod

We read that in the British popular fancy mermaids have always been familiar creatures, in fact several times they have been exhibited in the shops of London The London mermaid of 1775 was the subject of drawings in "The Gentleman's Magazine" "This London specimen appears to have

been rather handsome, gifted with the face of a young woman, it had light blue eyes, a small handsome nose, a little mouth, with thin lips and small regular white teeth. Hands and arms were well proportioned, but the fingers were without nails. From the waist downward the body resembled that of a cod fish." In Arnold's poem the mer-folk, however, are apparently not blessed with tails, but with two feet, as they are enabled to walk on the grave stones. In London "The Worshipful Company of Fishmongers" have for supporters to their arms a merman and mermaid, the latter of whom has a mirror in her hand, but no comb. The Anglo-Saxon mermaid, it will be noted, is a comfortable, bulky personage, compared to her Irish sister, radiant with Celtic glamor, rather more like the mermaid found by our Dutch cousins at Edam, where they make the cheeses. The famous Edam mermaid was seen struggling in the mud after an inundation in 1403, by some girls of the town of Edam, who were out in a boat seeking their cows. She had come through a breach in the dyke on the high tide. They pulled the strange newcomer out of the mire, washed and cleansed her and conveyed her to Edam, where she was clothed in their own garments. In the course of time she was taught to dress herself, to spin, and to make the sign of the cross. But it was found impossible to teach her to speak, notwithstanding that she was taken to Haarlem and placed under some learned men for that purpose. She retained a great fondness for the sea and even for rivers and canals, so that she had to be closely watched lest she might plunge into them. A sober Friesland chronicler of 1597 reasons that she was not a fish, because she could spin, and she was not a woman, because she could live in the sea; ergo, she must have been a mermaid.

Now the theme of Arnold's poem is in two respects somewhat rare. Here is a merman, instead of a mermaid, and, pathetic fairydom! it is the mortal who forsakes the fairy

mate Margaret is not "a woman wailing for her demon lover"

The tale of *The Forsaken Merman* as presented by Arnold occurs perhaps in its simplest form not in English tradition but far off on the borders of Russia and reappears in Slovene and German ballads. From the German ballads about the forsaken merman, perhaps, there developed in Denmark another version of the tradition, refined and idealized under the subtler influence of popular Danish poetic environment. The Danish version is more like the legend to which Arnold gives expression, than are the Slavic and German accounts. In the Danish and English poems the children stay home with the merman instead of going ashore with the mother, as in the German. He confronts her at church instead of at home. Most of the Danish poems, like Arnold's, have lost all suggestion of violence. The merman does not win Agnete by deceit but by the sheer charm of his personality. He does not threaten the children, nor does Agnete return in answer to his entreaties, but forsakes both him and her babe in the cradle of the sea.

We miss in the Danish ballad, of course, the subtle weaving which Arnold has shot into the narrative. Arnold begins where the ballad leaves off. We miss climbing over the grave-stones — Arnold's melancholy tombstone is an obvious heritage from English elegies — and the pensiveness of the wife when

The spindle drops from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still—

a beautiful image inherited by Arnold from the classics and related to Sappho's

Sweet mother, I can spin no more,  
Nor ply the loom as heretofore  
For love of him

We miss again in the ballad the musical cadence and the skilled manipulation of Arnold's metres. For all that, one is

astonished at the chastity, the restrained delicacy, the beauty of this treatment at the hands of 'the folk,' more subtle often than the work of the poet, subdued and also monochromed like Danish character and Danish landscape Is there anything in Arnold's melodiously repeated complaint more affecting than the short, sharp sting of those final verses of the Danish ballad?

Like the red, red gold was his shining hair,  
His eyes were full of sorrow and care

Harken now, Agnete, harken unto me,  
All thy little children are longing after thee

Let them long as they will, yea let them long so sore  
I shall return to them nevermore

The conceptions of amorous mermen and mermaidens are universal solvents for human grief and unsatisfied longing, pure and clean, bathed ever by ocean floods, free from the alloys of earth and its fret and decay, these creatures stand out luminously, as incarnations of beauty, as ideal objects of human love Popular ballad and folklore may pass, but the romantic mind will continue to employ this symbolism The biologist will leave his laboratory and, strolling in the moonlight along the Jersey beaches, will watch these carefree creatures disporting in the surf and envy the life of them that neither toil nor spin, but play about at moonlight and sleep at high noon in the sponges on the ocean floor. He will transfer to one of them his own private sorrow and experience relief

We submit that the mer-folk still exercise their spell over the unclouded athletic mind Only the other day Alfred Noyes in his *Enchanted Island* wrote about

The wild sea maiden  
Drifting through the starlit air  
With white sea-blossoms laden  
And the sea scents in her hair

Who knows but Beebe, the ornithologist, will find her fossil remains in dragging the Sargasso Sea

Recently one of our million-edition monthlies staked its commercial success for a season on a story which reclothed the old myth of Wayland and his brethren who captured the swanmaids into the remarkable adventures of shipwrecked American athletes with the half-mermaid creatures of Angel Isle — a tale said to be justified for its eugenic symbolism

The fairies are not yet dead. The mermen have not all been cast up to bleach upon desert shores. Whether or not our minds work toward symbolism, we still find pleasure in the pain of *The Forsaken Merman*, and have abundant sympathy for all lonely mermen in the sea or on dry shore who are unfortunate enough to be jilted by the ladies of this rational world — for those who cry “with eyes full of sorrow and care”.

Here came a mortal  
But faithless was she!  
And alone dwell forever  
The Kings of the Sea

## A NOTE ON YEATS



## A NOTE ON YEATS

By NORREYS JEPHSON O'CONOR

THE award of the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1923 to William Butler Yeats attracted attention to one of the leading poets of the English-speaking world, the man who stands in the popular imagination as the typical representative of the Celtic renaissance which began in 1889 with the publication of Mr Yeats's poem on an early Irish theme, "The Wanderings of Oisin." It would be difficult to overestimate the service of Mr Yeats to Ireland. He has reawakened enthusiasm for Irish traditions and for ancient Gaelic literature, he has founded a distinguished national theatre and to it contributed plays that have revived interest in poetic drama. Yet how far he has made his writing representative of the purpose of the renaissance — a reflection of the subject-matter, the beauty, and the characteristic style, of the older Gaelic literature — is a question which may well be reconsidered, now that he has recently collected and reedited his complete works.

The subdivisions of *Later Poems* bear the titles of the poet's previous volumes of verse as published separately, from *The Wind Among the Reeds*, of 1899, to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, of 1921. In *The Wind Among the Reeds*, which firmly established the new movement, the opening poem deals with the Fairies; in the group are references to "mother Eire," to "Cathleen ni Houlihan," to "Angus," to "Cumhal"; the distinct if not brilliant colors of Irish landscape form the background. But the rather casual verbal references and the general background scarcely provide sufficient material to make the book really Irish. Upon the literary world of the eight-

een-nineties, such slight references to what was unfamiliar made more impression than they do upon a public which has learned something of Ireland's Gaelic heritage and has lived through the Sinn Fein agitation Stronger than the Irish element in *The Wind Among the Reeds* seems Mr Yeats's personal predilection for the mystic and the occult, the "inviolate," the "incorruptible," Rose, the "Polar Dragon," the "Horses of Disaster" are more emphasized than Gaelic Ireland and the heroes of Gaelic literature, to the mystic and the decorative side of this book there is little, if any, parallel in ancient Irish writing. The period of the publication of *The Wind Among the Reeds* was one greatly influenced by William Morris and Walter Pater, Mr Yeats could hardly be expected to have escaped entirely the spirit of his time

Since, even in 1899, the individuality of the poet was stronger than the influence of national tradition, it is not surprising to find the preponderance of personality increasing with Mr Yeats's maturer powers It was probably inevitable that the original main purpose of the Irish renaissance should have been obscured by individual poetic impulse To restore the old, to interpret a common ideal, is less interesting than to express the new, the personal, poetry is stronger than propaganda The 1903-04 group in *Later Poems* includes "The Old Age of Queen Maeve" and "Baile and Ailinn," poems of early Ireland, in the 1914 group "The Two Kings" deals with one of the most lovely sagas, "The Courtship of Etain." To compare this poem with the literal translation in the *Revue Celtique* is to see how freely the poet has handled his material, he does not attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of old Irish civilization, he begins his story at a point after the classic description of Etain by the spring, thus sacrificing one of the most beautiful passages of "natural magic" in Irish literature; with the "stag whiter than curds" and the unicorn "In Africa on Mountain of the Moon" he goes out

of his way to introduce the symbolic. A further comparison can be made between "The Two Kings" and that earlier poem founded on an Irish theme, "The Wanderings of Oisin." Though Mr. Yeats in 1889 was none too close to his source, yet he was more faithful in reproducing the spirit and the color of Gaelic literature than in 1914. The colorful descriptions of Fairies and Fairyland in "The Wanderings of Oisin" are a contrast to what may be called the black and white of "The Two Kings."

The use of symbolism has grown with the poet's developing personality, the Irish references are chiefly to friends and to contemporary events, as in the memorial stanzas for Major Robert Gregory, or "September, 1913"; this tendency produces the vagueness of the dialogues between "Robartes" and other characters. The recrudescence of Ireland occurs in a few poems inspired by the Dublin rebellion of 1916, but, as everyone who has read widely in Irish literature knows, the poetry of protest is of a different temper from that dealing with traditional themes and figures.

The evolution of Mr. Yeats's poetry is closely paralleled by his progress as a dramatist. His first play in the new *Plays in Prose and Verse* is the early masterpiece, "Cathleen ni Houlihan," which is more steeped in the atmosphere of the literature of protest than in that of the older tradition. "The Pot of Broth" is a comedy dealing with the credulity of country folk, a theme which applies as well to any other country as to Ireland; "The Hour Glass" fully expresses Mr. Yeats's love for the symbolic. Of the ten plays, six—seven, if "The Shadowy Waters" be included—deal with distinctively Irish themes, four of them being based on material from the early Gaelic. Though the characters, and sometimes the themes, are traditional, the playwright has modernized both: in early Ireland the Arts did not need the defence given in "The King's Threshold," where the ancient Irish practice of

fasting as a means of distress is made an element in a play modern in tone, the Cuchulain of "On Baile's Strand" is intellectualized as compared with the hero of the sagas, the birds of "The Shadowy Waters" surely owe much to Mr Yeats's youthful friendship with that great Irish mystic, A E, and "Deirdre" has a polished decorative quality prefiguring the oriental plays in which the playwright was later to have so great an interest. Of the dramas dealing with early Ireland, "The Green Helmet" is probably the best, here the ruggedness and the humor have a suggestion of their source, "The Feast of Bricriu," one of the most interesting of the ancient tales — the element of magic introduced by the three black hands is the most modern, and the only false, element in the play. The verse form is also unusual, for the dialogue is written mainly in rhymed alexandrines. The symbolism of "The Unicorn from the Stars," in which the poet worked in collaboration with Lady Gregory, undoubtedly is due to Mr Yeats, as the characterization of the country folk is due to Lady Gregory.

Though Mr Yeats's work both as poet and as playwright has been less devoted to Irish subjects than might be supposed, yet it still has Irish characteristics, found in the mind and the temperament of the author. Certainly no modern writer of English has a greater "turn for style," which Matthew Arnold long since pointed out as a distinctive mark of the Celt. There is pleasing fitness in the poet's cadences, which always avoid monotony, and the vowel sounds are beautifully modulated, no attempt to write rapidly has resulted in carelessness, Mr Yeats has taken time to polish, to acquire the art that conceals art. Not only his feeling for craftsmanship but his imagination betray his heritage, his love for the mystic and the occult is a modern expression of a love for magic and for the grotesque that is a recurrent characteristic of the ancient Gaelic, Cuchulain undertakes scarcely an adventure

without being circumscribed by one prohibition or another, and he is continually encountering sorcerers and evil spirits

Mr Yeats's nationality is deeper than the mere use of themes and characters, it is of the texture of his strong personality Belonging to the company of Swift, Goldsmith, Sheridan, he is as individual a writer as any whose work is part of English as well as of Irish letters To point out that he does not owe so much of his fame to his choice of subject as to his own genius, to show that the popular estimate of his work is based partly upon misconception, is to do him no injury, rather is it an indication that he is an outstanding figure of his generation and assured of a permanent place in literature Though he may not be one of the great poets of Ireland, he is a great Irish poet



**JOSEPH CONRAD, ALCHEMIST OF THE SEA**



# JOSEPH CONRAD, ALCHEMIST OF THE SEA<sup>x</sup>

*December 6, 1857 — August 3, 1924*

By PERCY A. HUTCHISON

IT was in 1878 that there landed in the English North Sea port of Lowestoft a lad, slight of build and rather short of stature, who had been born in the Polish province of the Ukraine nineteen years before. The lad's name was Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski. He was a shy boy, speaking no English, but he was consumed with a devouring passion for the sea and the ambition to ship before the mast under the red ensign of the British merchant service. Masters of British sailing ships cared little about the nationality or the speech of those they signed, they were used to inarticulate foreigners from the ends of the earth. If a man could keep his grip on a bellying topsail when reefing down in a gale, and hold the vessel on her course through the whip of a North Sea blizzard, nothing else was of any moment; and the Polish lad already knew something of seamanship, learned aboard French craft in the Mediterranean and on two voyages to the West Indies. He soon found a ship — the Lowestoft coaster, *Skimmer of the Seas*. Her skipper's name has been forgotten long since, and is scarcely to be come across unless in the yellowed pages of some marine journal of the day, while that of Joseph Conrad will endure so long as English literature is read. Strange history for one of foreign birth — from forecastle to quarter-deck, and from command on the quarter-deck to a commanding position in the literature of an adopted land!

And yet this evolution, although unique, is far from inexplicable. On the contrary, it was as inevitable as is all evolution.

<sup>x</sup> Written at the request of the editor of "The International Book Review" for a memorial article on Joseph Conrad, September, 1924.

tion Granting, as of course must be granted, that the artistic impulse was latent in Conrad from the first, his art and his seafaring, instead of being the result of separate causes, will be seen as the result of one single and all-dominating cause. In an article which very likely will prove to have been his last individual expression (it is understood that a work in collaboration remains), Conrad has himself furnished the key, the master-key. The article will be found in *The National Geographic Magazine* for March 1924, the title being "Geography and Some Explorers." The entire piece is significant, but there is one passage which stands out, for it goes to the very heart of all Conrad's psychology, all his philosophy, all his living.

In 1888 Conrad, who had received his certificate as master mariner a few years earlier, was in command of a sailing-ship loading at Sydney, Australia, for Mauritius. "All of a sudden," he writes, "all the deep-lying, historic sense of the exploring adventures in the Pacific surged up to the surface of my being. Almost without reflection I sat down and wrote a letter to my owners, suggesting instead of the usual southern route, I take the ship to Mauritius by way of Torres Strait. I ought to have received a severe rap on the knuckles for submitting such an unheard-of proposition."

Dangerous waters, Torres Strait, for sailing-vessels, because of the calms that prevail there; as dangerous, almost, as the Sargasso Sea, and except for the Spanish explorer, Torres, for whom the Strait is named, and James Cook, the English explorer, perhaps never traversed by any European sailing-ship. Yet Conrad was bent on attempting the passage, and for the reason, the sole reason, that in spirit he was one with the great explorers who were dead, their imagination was his imagination, their courage his courage. "I was never lonely at sea," he writes in the same article, "because I never lacked company — the company of the great navigators."

So Conrad trimmed his sails and headed through Torres Strait, for, instead of the expected "rap on the knuckles," his owners gave him the permission he desired, merely adding, somewhat plaintively, that they supposed he knew the insurance would cost them more "It must have been a romantic day in the office of Messrs H Simpson & Sons," says Conrad. It must, indeed, when hardfisted owners would pay an increase of insurance premiums that one of their captains might take to dangerous waters merely to follow in the wake of a navigator dead two hundred years! More probably they thought him mad—as he was, with the madness of Columbus and of Drake—and were already planning how they could drop him from their service before he hatched further hare-brained schemes. But can there be any doubt that in the imagination which lay behind this request is to be found the master-key to Joseph Conrad? The Ulysses of Tennyson's poem, about to set forth on his last voyage, is made to exclaim

For my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die

Conrad would sail beyond the sunset, he would follow in the wake of the great navigators, they who had marked out the earth, and the waters thereof

Yet, even as he entered Torres Strait he must have realized the second-hand nature of his adventure, and that the baths of all the western stars lay for him elsewhere. Already he had started on his own voyages, those voyages of the mind, of which each one of his books, each one of his short stories, is the imperishable log. A power greater than himself, the power of that expanding imagination which had compelled him when a child to declare his intention of going to the Kongo, which had compelled him, when a youth, to go to sea—this power was already driving Conrad on to demand an ever larger, more colorful, and freer world, the world of the crea-

tive artist, which for him meant the world of letters. At first his writing had proceeded fitfully, and with many misgivings on his part. But when he had finished *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, he knew that he was done with the sea. "After writing the last words of that book," he says in the foreword to his American readers, "I understood that I was done with the sea, and that henceforth I had to be a writer." And it is evident from this confession, supplemented as it is now by the story of the incident of Torres Strait, that Conrad's evolution was determined from the outset, and his history is seen, not as two separated histories, but as one, the events of which, from forecastle to preeminence as a writer, were necessitated by his all-compelling imagination.

If we turn now from this larger question to a consideration of Conrad's literary work itself, we shall find that work everywhere directly influenced by Conrad's years at sea. And this is true not merely in so far as it relates to his selection of plot and locale, the influence is seen also in the manner and the method of his writing. A ship's captain is often spoken of as being a czar; but the expression is inadequate. A ship's master has absolute power while at sea, short only of the power over life and death; and in the old sailing days he not infrequently usurped this. But no monarch, not even the most absolute, was ever obliged to match his cunning against the powers of nature. The czar may have to cope with revolution — for which, in our microcosm of the ship, read mutiny — but it is not laid upon him to scan through interminable hours the inverted dome of the sky, or the restless surface of the deep, lest he and the subjects of his care be overwhelmed. Omnipotence, then, all but complete omnipotence within his tiny, floating world, and unremitting vigilance that that world be not destroyed — the sea captain possesses one by the right of command, and continued existence depends upon the unremitting exercise of the other.

Here, then, we see Conrad the master-mariner. Here also is to be found Conrad the master-artist. No other novelist has ever dominated more absolutely the "solidarity" (a favorite Conradian term) of events and persons which is for the moment the object of his literary solicitude. And no other writer, not even excepting Stevenson, ever exercised more unremitting vigilance. In the "supprest" preface to *The Nigger*, that preface (restored in the American edition) which is Conrad's confession of faith, he has written: "It is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to color, and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words, of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless use."

Herein is the insistence on his right to power which Conrad had learned at sea; and unfaltering vigilance. And here is also one trait more of the seaman — unswerving devotion to the idea of service.

Various attempts have been made to label Conrad. Some critics have called him a romantic, others a realist. Some have even dared the meaningless and monstrous paradox, "romantic realist." It would seem that these critics either have misunderstood their terms, or have failed to read Conrad with understanding. In no event can they have read the "Preface," in which they would have found Conrad's own words: "One can not be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them — the truth which each imperfectly veils — should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions. But they all — realism, romanticism, naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism — all of these gods must, after a short period of fellowship,

abandon him to the stammerings of his conscience and to the outspoken consciousness of the difficulties of his work”

Why should Conrad insist that no one of these formulas can be more than a temporary guide? Again the answer is to be found in his years at sea. Realism, romanticism, naturalism, most of all sentimentalism — any one of these, exclusively followed, leads in the end to falseness, to compromise, to charlatanism. There can be no compromise with the sea; he who navigates the oceans cannot be a charlatan and long survive. Again and again does Conrad emphasize this in his writings. He brings the point home with sardonic humor in *Typhoon*. That story is Conrad's protest against the romantic view of the sea which prevails in popular fiction. Yet Conrad had himself taken a romantic, even a sentimental, attitude toward the sea in his youthful days. He admits as much. But he felt this romantic and false worship slough away when he came to realize the sea's cruelty. As junior officer he had charge of one of two boats sent to rescue the crew from a sinking bark. The incident is related in *The Mirror of the Sea*: “On that exquisite day of gentle, breathing peace and veiled sunshine perished my romantic love for what men's imagination had proclaimed the most august aspect of nature . . . I looked with other eyes upon the sea

the true sea, the sea that plays with men's hearts until they are broken, and wears stout ships to death”

And again, in *The Nigger*, there are the words which Conrad puts into the mouth of Old Singleton, one of the foremast hands: “He looked upon the immortal sea with the awakened perception of its heartless might, he saw it unchanged, black and foaming under the eternal scrutiny of the stars, he heard its impatient voice calling for him out of a pitiless vastness full of unrest, of turmoil, and of terror.”

Joseph Conrad lost his romantic love of the sea when his illusions as to the sea were swept away; but he ever acknowl-

edged the fettering power of fascination which the sea exercised over him, the only difference being that for romantic worship he substituted respect — that respect and humbleness of spirit which is the deepest part of religion.

Conrad, then, is not a "romantic realist," or a "realistic romantic," for these terms are meaningless, they are also an insult to the memory of one whose vision of the truth — in life as in art — while embracing all formulas, looked through them all to the clear light which they obscured while revealing. Yet Conrad, in his art, combined both realism and romanticism. To romance he gave the solid foundation and the dignity of realism, his realism he shot through and irradiated with the color and the glow of romance. In this lies the uniqueness of his literary work, which, taken in its entirety, will probably never be equaled in gorgeousness of pageantry combined with profound knowledge of man's soul. And the secret of Conrad's alchemy, the solvent which he applies to life and to art, he drew from out the sea. It is the distillation of his knowledge of the sea.



STELLIGERI  
A FOOTNOTE ON DEMOCRACY



## STELLIGERI A FOOTNOTE ON DEMOCRACY

By EDWARD EYRE HUNT

"In the class lists the names of the dead were prefixed by asterisks. In the final summary, the number of the dead was defined thus *E vivis cesserunt stelligeri* — They that bear the stars have passed from among the living. To all of us who cared for the old catalogues, the dead men of Harvard were always stelligeri — they that bear the stars" (*Stelligeri and Other Essays concerning America*)

AS a man of letters, a "rhetorician and literary critic" as he called himself, Barrett Wendell might have been expected to confine himself to literature, perhaps a few excursions into the general field of education would have been permitted him, but what is one to think of his persistent intrusion into a wholly alien field — the field of political theory? And as if this were not strange enough, one finds him choosing for cultivation and defence in the field of politics a topic which one might think most antipathetic to him, namely, the popular dogma of democracy. He first came to the defence of the democratic creed in *Stelligeri and Other Essays concerning America* (1893), again at length in *The France of To-day* (1907), at still greater length in *Liberty, Union, and Democracy—the National Ideals of America* (1906), yet again in *The Privileged Classes* (1908), and it colored his *Literary History of America* (1900) and *The Mystery of Education* (1909).

In the first of these — *Stelligeri* — he makes a stirring avowal: "We may lament as we please the follies and the errors of the thousand-headed populace who stand for us in the place traditionally held in history by consecrated sovereigns, but each of us would still rather live and die a citizen than even

the proudest subject Whoever does not feel this spirit in himself cannot know, in his inner heart, what the name American means ”

Of course he deals with the democratic dogma in his own inimitable way He provides it with a proud ancestry, but an ancestry that is purely American He believes there was something indigenous, almost spontaneous in its origins. “By the time of the American Revolution . . something like a democratic system had become traditional throughout the colonies,” he says<sup>1</sup> And he defends the popular creed just because it is traditional

The language of American democracy may be radical, he explains, but the thing in itself is conservative “So far as one can define the term ‘democracy,’ it means here, as everywhere else, the rule of the people . . To Europe the rule of the people means something gloriously Utopian. To America, this rule means something immemorially familiar.”<sup>2</sup>

“A curious fact results When revolutionary America, full of the enthusiasm of the later eighteenth century, echoed back the French philosophical declarations of the rights of man, it used concerning liberty, terms which still sounded radical and destructive. At the same time, the democratic generalizations of revolutionary America really proclaimed no unprecedented policy, hostile to the form of government under which the revolutionists had hitherto been living. Rather, in the case of democracy as truly as in that of liberty, the living strength of revolutionary America lay in its determination to maintain unchanged a system of customary law and of established government which had already proved immemorially favorable to American prosperity and American righteousness.”<sup>3</sup>

“Radical, then, as the terms of our democratic assertion must always sound, radical as our revolutionary forefathers

<sup>1</sup> *Liberty, Union, and Democracy.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

may have believed themselves in the heat of conflict, the fervor with which those idealistic yet orderly ancestors of ours insisted that we must maintain a democratic system of government was really, like so much else in their conduct, an evidence of their political conservatism”<sup>1</sup>

In his *Literary History of America*, he has rephrased this conception of our democracy in the skilful repetitive way which never grows tiresome though he say the same thing a dozen times “France was . . . blindly developing that abstract philosophy of human rights which less than twenty years later resulted in the tragic convulsions of the French Revolution. The fascinating commonplaces of this philosophy were eagerly welcomed in America, where they have been popularly repeated ever since. From that time to this, indeed, American talk has been so radical that comparatively few appreciate how slightly all these glittering generalities have really distorted American conduct from the good old principle that human rights are those which experience has proved beneficial.”

What, then, is this traditional democracy to which he renders allegiance? Mr. Wendell defines it thus. “Democracy with us . . . is not the tyranny of any one class over any other, but the consent of all classes — none secured by inflexible privilege — to exist together under a system trusted by all to act as guardian and agent of their common welfare. A true democracy . . . must tolerantly include all manner of men.”<sup>2</sup>

If in the pages to follow I seem to take too seriously the political utterances of Mr. Wendell, my excuse is that another “mere professor” of the generation to which he belongs, used this same doctrine as a fighting slogan and by its means substantially contributed to the winning of the World War. If the doctrine so enunciated was misunderstood; if the peoples

<sup>1</sup> *Liberty, Union, and Democracy.*

<sup>2</sup> *The France of To-day*

of Europe were disheartened by the difference between the democratic faith of the late President Woodrow Wilson and his works, I believe that study of the writings of Mr. Wendell might have been of more value to them than the utterances of the President himself in understanding what an American of the generation now passing may mean when he professes the democratic creed.

But fascinating as this subject is, my purpose is to deal with a very different question.

The democratic creed of tolerance and inclusiveness has now been tested by three centuries of American history. Its peculiar traditional and conservative character lays it open to special weaknesses in time of stress. The development of modern industrialism is one of these stresses. War is another. Because of the far-flung character of the World War and the long period of suspense before America entered the fight, that period as well as the period of our participation was highly important in the illumination of the democratic dogma. Hence I have chosen to test this American credo, as enunciated by Mr. Wendell and given world-wide prominence by President Wilson, by contrasting with it the ideals of two of Harvard's gifted sons who died in the war. Others than these might have been chosen who would have illustrated ideals more nearly like those of the majority; the plain wooden crosses in French and Belgian burial grounds cover men whose hearts were equally warm and whose purposes were equally high. But these two were men already marked out from the mass of humanity. They came of old American stock, they were educated at America's foremost university; they were men of mark and distinction. They did not die for democracy; they did not die for America. To me it has always seemed a matter of moment that they gave their lives for alien principles, alien traditions, alien purposes, and alien lands. One of them sleeps in northern France, the other, in

Red Russia. Both were my friends and my classmates, and both were pupils of Mr Wendell

## I

Alan Seeger was conspicuous at Harvard. In thought, word, and deed he was different from his fellows. His appearance was striking. He made it more striking still. He was very tall, his hair was jet black, remarkably thick and straight, his eyes had a peculiar liquid look, and his face was a beautiful oval.

He lived in an atmosphere of mediæval romance, such as would have delighted Keats and Shelley. It was devotion to the past so poignant that one wondered how he could ever live in the modern work-a-day world.

One of his letters describes this period. "As you may remember, in the years when I was at college, I was a devotee of Learning for Learning's sake. I led the life of an anchorite. At an age when the social instincts are usually most lively I came to understand the pleasures of solitude. My books were my friends. The opening to me of the shelves of the college library, a rare privilege, was like opening the gates of an earthly paradise. In those dark alleys I would spend afternoons entire, browsing among old folios, following lines of research that often had no connection with my courses, following them simply for the pleasure of the explorer discovering new countries. I never regret those years. They made their contribution. Their pleasures were tranquil and pure. Their desires were simple and all the means of satisfying them were at hand.

"But my hedonism, if such it may be called, was not superficial like that of so many, to whom the emotional means only the sexual. I was sublimely consistent. For seeing, in the macrocosm, all Nature revolve about the twin poles of Love and Strife, of attraction and repulsion, so no less in the micro-

cosm of my individual being I saw the emotional life equally divided between those two cardinal principles. The dedication to Love alone, as Ovid prettily confesses his own in more than one elegy, is good as far as it goes, but it only goes half way, and my aspiration was to go all the gamut, to 'drink life to the lees.' My interest in life was passion, my object to experience it in all rare and refined, in all intense and violent forms."

Such a man could not exist successfully in the modern world. After graduation he stayed for a time in New York, and one of the legends about him at which we laughed immoderately was the story of his first love affair. In order to make a proper sacrifice for the young lady, he signalized the declaration of his love by giving up the precarious job on which he was absolutely dependent. The young lady could not appreciate this romantic type of sacrifice, poor Alan was rejected, and thrown on the town.

These gay thymes describe him:

A timid footstep, — enter then the eager  
 KEATS-SHELLEY-SWINBURNE-MEDIAEVAL-SEEGER,  
 Poe's raven bang above Byronic brow,  
 And Dante's beak, — you have his picture now,  
 In fact he is, though feigning not to know it,  
 The popular conception of a poet  
 Dreaming, his eyes are steadily alight  
 With splendours of a world beyond our sight;  
 He nothing knows of this material sphere, —  
 Unwilling seems, at times, to linger here,  
 Beauty is all his breath, his blood, he says, —  
 Beauty his shrine, and Love its priestesses  
 Wildly he talks, with solemn, bell-like voice,  
 In words that might have been old Malory's choice.<sup>2</sup>

A somewhat happier period of his life came when he went to Paris in 1913 and buried himself in that congenial city. It was his love for Paris — personified, of course, as a woman — which led him to enlist in the French Foreign Legion in

<sup>2</sup> John Reed, *The Day in Bohemia, or Life Among the Artists*, 1913, p. 42.

the third week of the war His sentimental and romantic nature here found its fulfilment His reasons for enlisting he explained on several occasions always in the simple terms of a lover fighting for his lady, or a son for his mother And his tolerance for the German point of view was simple and instinctive.

But there was something else in the instinct which sent him to the front. "People war because strife is the law of nature and force the ultimate arbitrament among humanity no less than in the rest of the universe," he wrote, describing the thoughts of a sentry "He is on the side he is fighting for, not in the last analysis from ethical motives at all, but because destiny has set him in such a constellation" The sense of his responsibility is strong upon him Playing a part in the life of nations he is taking part in the largest movement his planet allows him

"He thrills with the sense of filling an appointed necessary place in the conflict of hosts, and facing the enemy's crest above which the Great Bear wheels upward to the zenith, he feels, with a sublimity of enthusiasm that he has never before known, a kind of companionship with the stars!"

"This life agrees with me, there will be war for many years to come in Europe and I shall continue to be a soldier as long as there is war." \*

I do not suppose in all the armies there was such another paladin. The pure poetry in his makeup was never more evident than in this. He could even write: "Perhaps historic fatality has decreed that Germany shall come out of this struggle triumphant and that the German people shall dominate in the twentieth century as French, English, Spanish, and Italian have in preceding centuries. To me the matter of supreme importance is not to be on the winning side, but on the side where my sympathies lie Feeling no greater dignity

\* *Letters and Diary of Alan Seeger, 1917*, p. 38

possible for a man than that of one who makes himself the instrument of Destiny in these tremendous moments, I naturally ranged myself on the side to which I owed the greatest obligation. But let it always be understood that I never took arms out of any hatred against Germany or the Germans, but purely out of love for France. The German contribution to civilization is too large, and German ideals too generally in accord with my own, to allow me to join in the chorus of hate against a people whom I frankly admire. It was only that the France, and especially the Paris, that I love should not cease to be the glory and the beauty that they are that I engaged."

That word "glory" is also typical. In his diary he sets down his dream of the triumphant French army entering an ancient city of northern France, and the climax is reached in a description of "the winged figure that her soldiers love to picture at the head of their victorious battalions — *la Gloire!*" I do not recall in any American recruiting poster, or appeal for war loans, or military communiqué, or speech in Congress, or note of President Wilson, one reference to "glory." To the American people the war was not glorious. To Alan Seeger it was.

He knew nothing and cared nothing for democracy. He instinctively revolted from its works. In a sonnet to Sidney he says:

I give myself some credit for the way  
I have kept clean of what enslaves and lowers,  
Shunned the ideals of our present day  
And studied those that were esteemed in yours  
And lived in strict devotion all along  
To my three idols — Love and Arms and Song.<sup>x</sup>

In his published diary and letters there is never a sign of political emotion. The unique insulation of his poetic mind kept him in a curious degree "unspotted from the world."

<sup>x</sup> *Poems of Alan Seeger*, 1916, p. 145.

Unlike the other soldier-poets, he did not record disappointments, doubts, despairs, rages, horrors, self-abasements In the midst of strife he was at peace

On April 2, 1917, addressing the Congress of the United States, President Woodrow Wilson declared "We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts — for democracy" Those ringing words would have found no echo in the dead heart of Alan Seeger He was killed on July 4, 1916.

The manner of his death has been fittingly told Two battalions of the Foreign Legion were to attack Belloy-en-Santerre It was late afternoon The companies forming the first wave were deployed in the plain, Alan Seeger's one of them "How pale he was! His tall silhouette stood out on the green of the cornfield He was the tallest man in his section. His head erect, and pride in his eye, I saw him running forward, with bayonet fixed" He fell mortally wounded, and his comrades swept by him

They did not find his body until morning Legend has it that his rifle was standing with bayonet fixed in the earth The corpse was mother-naked He had stripped off his clothes, with poetic ritualism, and went from the world as he came into it.

His citation reads in part: "*Jeune légionnaire, enthousiaste et énergique, aimant passionnément la France Glorieusement tombé le 4 juillet, 1916.*"

## II

John Reed was a college celebrity His virile, humorous personality was one of the best-known in Harvard in his undergraduate days. Born of old American strains, respectable, conservative — New England at its best — and yet himself a product of the great Northwest; large, athletic, exuberant, always smiling, he plunged into everything which

Harvard offered He wrote plays, poems, and humorous skits, he swam, he "managed" college activities; he was Ibis of the *Lampoon* and editor of the *Monthly*, his lyrics for the Hasty Pudding show are still sung, he was a cheer-leader at football games, he delivered the Ivy oration There was something Elizabethan in his huge vitality He loved life

And through everything he did there ran a strain of the grotesque which turned the most serious event into laughter. The college authorities were compelled by his pranks to revive the archaic punishment of rustication, a kind of academic jail sentence, the first of his innumerable incarcerations

After graduation Reed was locked up in the jails of France, Spain, and Italy, and with each mad adventure the delighted laughter of his friends grew louder We always expected him to ruin himself, but he never quite did it

He returned to America and hurried to New York determined to make a million dollars and to marry a French girl In six months he had given up both the million and the fiancée. "Everyone" knew Jack Reed He was the sort about whom legends breed. He could not be ignored.

He joined the staff of a popular magazine. He roamed at will through the various little worlds which go to make up the universe of New York, everywhere at home, everywhere welcomed and made much of. The world of the writers and artists was his birthright, but he played with the Anarchists, the Socialists, and he knew the byways of the *demi-monde*. He lived in Greenwich Village and loved it. I quote from one of his gay lyrics:

In winter the water is frigid,  
In summer the water is hot,  
And we're forming a club for controlling the tub  
For there's only one bath to the lot  
You shave in unlathering Croton,  
If there's water at all, which is rare, —  
But the life is n't bad for a talented lad  
At Forty-Two Washington Square!

And he hated pretence. This is how he describes a group of Greenwich Villagers

A lofty, skylit room,  
Each window draped, and dusky as a tomb,  
On a brass tripod Chinese punk doth smell,  
And scented candles stink and fume as well,  
Surely no fresh air ever enters here  
This must be the Artistic Atmosphere

A clack of squabbling voices smites the ear  
Dim in the murk the other cranks appear,  
SHAEMAS, who out-revives the Celt revival, —  
Considers Synge an upstart and a rival,  
SREPTHON, who sings of Youth, and Wind, and Flowers,  
The Open Road, and Vagabonds, for hours,  
Cries "Back to Nature," goes without a hat,  
And — never stirs from his steam-heated flat!  
Anear him CHLOE, in a pastoral dress, —  
Which cost at least three hundred flat, I guess,  
Revolves her onyx eyes with some success,  
She wields no brush, manipulates no lyre,  
Her job in life is simply to Inspire .  
And here's the RICH MAN, fidgetting beside us,  
Who tries to be Maecenas, — and is Midas,  
And from his talk, it presently appears  
That every Midas has an ass's ears!  
And all about, a dozen curious females,  
Who would be, and again would never be males,  
The mild, the violent, the stout, the thin, —  
One cup of Oolong makes the whole crowd kin \*

Of course the magazines published his poems and sketches, and he wrote a play performed by a club of magazine men, satirizing their venality, calling it *Every Magazine — an Immorality Play*. He reported the great strike in the Patterson Silk mills, was jailed, and when released he staged a pageant benefit with twelve-hundred strikers as the actors. He reported the Mexican revolution, and published a book about Villa. He reported the coal strike in Colorado. When the World War broke out, he had already won his spurs as a correspondent and was one of the best-known and best-paid newspaper writers in America.

\* John Reed, *The Day in Bohemia, or Life Among the Artists*, 1913, pp. 30, 31

Along with this crescendo of reportorial success had gone a deepening of the instinct of revolt which had led him in Harvard to join the Socialist club and to be the champion of various unconventional movements. He was a revolutionist, and Socialism rationalized his instinct for change. He revolted at exploitation in every form, and if his reasoning was superficial, his feelings were not. The poet, the adventurer, demanded life in greater and greater abundance. He wanted worlds to conquer, but he wanted them for others as well as for himself.

He was one of the founders of the *Masses* (later the *Liberator*), and in the midst of his lucrative work for the magazines he always found time to send his best to this struggling publication. The creed of the *Masses* was Socialism. But what Reed contributed to the paper was not propaganda, it was art.

When the war began, he went abroad. As war correspondent for the *Metropolitan* magazine he visited every battle-front and every belligerent country in Europe. But his course as correspondent was quickly run. Sir Philip Gibbs waited until after the war was over to write *Now it can be Told*; John Reed could not wait. He hated the war. He found it "dull; it was n't interesting." He wrote a book about it, and in this book one finds a fateful reference to "the mysterious and violent spotted fever, which kills fifty per cent of its victims, and whose bacillus no man had then discovered." It was the spotted fever which killed him.

When America entered the war, Reed was an out-and-out pacifist. He fought American participation. Propaganda took possession of his work. A sample is this:

Hip! Hip! Hurray!

New York, April 11, — Louis Feuerstein, 76 years old, was shot through the heart and killed instantly, yesterday, by a soldier stationed at Park Avenue and 114th Street. The old man did not obey the soldier's command to stop.

"The war for democracy has begun. The first shot has been fired, the first blood shed, in our righteous war for liberty and the rights of small nations

"Let us be thankful that the discipline of our soldiery left no question in the mind of this brave soldier as to what his duty was. If he had any doubts he suppressed them, and repeating to himself the eloquent words of President Wilson's War Message, he raised his gun and took steady aim 'Make way for liberty!' he said, and pulled the trigger."

He threw himself into radical movements. When the Bolshevik revolution came, he was in Petrograd, and here he found a congenial task. "This morning I was at the scene of the dispersal of the junkers defending the Winter Palace by the Soviet troops. In the afternoon I was present at the opening of the All-Russian Assembly of Soviets. In the evening I witnessed the assault on the Winter Palace, entering with the first Bolshevik troops," he wrote. This was life! To him this war had meaning. But what he was now writing was not art; it was only propaganda. The artist was stifled.

He returned to America, to find himself in grave trouble with the State Department and the police. The Bolsheviks appointed him their consul-general in New York. He was one of the organizers of the Communist Labor Party. He was indicted, tried, and acquitted; indicted again, but not tried, because he had already left America in another effort to get to Russia. The war was not yet over for Russia and the border states. In 1920 the *cordon sanitaire* was still in force. No medicine, surgical supplies, or food could pass, and the sick died for want of simple things.

Reed was arrested and imprisoned in Finland. Only after long delays he again reached Red Russia.

He returned "older and sadder and grown strangely gentle and æsthetic." The cruel Russian winter had not yet begun, but starvation stalked abroad, and with starvation strode that

grimmer specter, the typhus. His clothes were in rags, he refused to be better clad than his Russian comrades, he had reached "the pinnacle of fervor" Three months' solitary confinement in the Finnish jail, where he had only raw fish to eat, had wasted his athletic frame to a shadow He fell ill.

She who was dearest to him has written that in cases of spotted fever "the patient wastes to nothing under your eyes" In those anguishing twenty days "his mind was full of poems and stories and little beautiful thoughts He would tell me the water he drank was full of little songs."

He had once written a poem called "Fog".

Death comes like this, I know —  
Snow-soft and gently cold,  
Impalpable battalions of thin mist,  
Light-quenching and sound-smothering and slow

How vast your voice has grown  
That was so silver-soft,  
Dim dies the candle-glory of your face —  
Though we go hand in hand, I am alone

Now love and all the warm  
Pageant of livingness  
Trouble my quiet like forgotten dreams  
Of ancient thunder on the hills of storm

How loud, how terribly  
Aflame are lights and sounds!  
And yet beyond the fog I know there are  
But lonely bells across gray wastes of sea.<sup>2</sup>

So he died in Moscow, an outlaw, a man wanted by the police, on October 17, 1920.

In the old cemetery under the ancient Kremlin wall, in ground once sacred to the Romanoffs, the soldiers of the Red Army laid him. They said to one another, "He came all the way across the world for us." They could not know across how many worlds he had come.

<sup>2</sup> Copyrighted by Charles Scribner's Sons.

## III

In a recent volume called *Civilization in the United States — An Inquiry by Thirty Americans*, edited by a son of Harvard who believes as ardently as Reed and Seeger that beauty and liberty are to be found abroad but not at home, there is a call for a general revision of our standards. The work is a symptom of a widespread feeling that neither tolerance nor inclusiveness are longer to be found here. Generous-minded young men fly from Main Street to the boulevards, and we do not lack apologists for Bolshevism.

But these emotional revolts are not the whole story. The world everywhere is in rebellion against the democratic creed. Everywhere there is skepticism and pessimism regarding the aims, the methods and the institutions of political government. Written constitutions, elective assemblies, government by discussion — these are viewed with indifference if not with contempt by inert majorities, while militant minorities openly flout them.

In nation after nation the storm has gathered. Communism, it is true, has not spread much beyond the confines of Russia, but the Soviet Government has maintained itself with conspicuous strength while constitutional governments have shifted and fallen. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" is paralleled elsewhere by dictatorships of an equally sinister sort, equally fatal to democratic principles. Italy has her Mussolini; Hungary, her Horthy; Greece, her Pangalos; China, her Chang Tso Lin; Spain her Primo de Rivera. France has shown signs of cæsarism, and Germany has only the shadow of a democratic government. The British Empire throughout seems in the throes of change. Our own America has been profoundly shaken by obscurantism and reaction. Bolshevism, Fascismo, *camelots du roi*, tuchuns, juntas, Ku Klux Klan — these are names which stink in the nostrils of one who believes in democracy.

## IV

What the true American democracy is; what the indigenous culture of America is to which we give our allegiance, another has said more competently than I can do Horace M. Kallen, in *Culture and Democracy in the United States*, a book which is dedicated to the memory of Barrett Wendell, develops the creed of tolerance and inclusiveness He asserts that it "is founded upon variation of racial groups and individual character, upon spontaneous differences of social heritage, institutional habit, mental attitude, and emotional tone; upon the continuous, free and fruitful cross-fertilization of these by one another .

"From the days when the New England school first turned its heart to Europe for spiritual sustenance and workmanlike guidance to the days when all the cultural enclaves of Europe began to make a new life upon the North American continent, the culture of the United States has gathered volume and headway, has gathered variety, color, and significance It has gathered them because, regardless of the compulsions toward uniformity that have periodically swept like tides over the nation, the spacious continent has permitted the spontaneous self-rooting and automatic growth of differentiated communities and the free flow, impact, compenetration and reordering of spiritual values between them. It has gathered them because in the spaces of the continent democracy could not but prevail, and the lives of cultural groups retain their integrities even as the lives of individual spirits.

"This democracy — in character and constitution social and intellectual rather than political — for its principle is, not one man one vote, but one temperament, one point of view, one vote — is that which is to-day at stake in the United States. It lies — as the history of culture of any land makes amply clear — at the foundation of culture every-

where It is the indispensable prerequisite to the existence and growth of culture in the United States In manyness, variety, differentiation, lies the vitality of such oneness as they may compose."

This is the ideal and this is the reality, obscured and disfigured as it was by the war To flee this America, as Reed and Seeger did, is not to save one's soul alive Here, if anywhere, is to be worked out the fundamental difficulty of democracy — namely, that tolerance and inclusiveness are not only a philosophy or a form of government, they are a way of life

How can these things be reconciled? I do not believe that the reconciliation is easy, but I believe that it is possible It implies that in the field of politics as well as of culture America is not one but many, the tradition on which we are to build is not single but plural Our union is to be the stronger for our differences, and our differences are our very life blood

It is in our industrial life that the methods of reconciliation and the creation of unity from variety are to-day most promising. In the clash of interests between employers and employees we are developing a technique of democratic agreement the purpose of which is not compromise but creation, we are learning to have a new concept of the mutuality of law, a new respect and appreciation for science in human relationships Compared with the relative stagnation of political democracy, our economic democracy is stirring with life and hope.

Science has given us in a single century more than in all the forty centuries which have preceded, yet it has scarcely touched the problem of politics. It is inconceivable that the ideal activity of the Greek philosophers and of generous minds of all ages is to remain a craft of which mankind is more than half ashamed. Not our aims but our methods require revision. It is inconceivable that the ballot, the very symbol of democracy, is to remain a dull device for registering our dif-

ferences instead of helping to forge new bases for our agreements.

President Eliot has dared to call our day "the happiest age the world has ever known." In spite of the débris and the ashes of war, those words ring true. Not in a return to the ideal of *la Gloire*, not in a leap forward to the chimera of Communism, but in the working out of the problems of our traditional democracy is the good life to be lived. For each of us, "here is our America."